GOLDBERG FINALLY SPEAKS: "I WILL BE BACK!"

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February 2002

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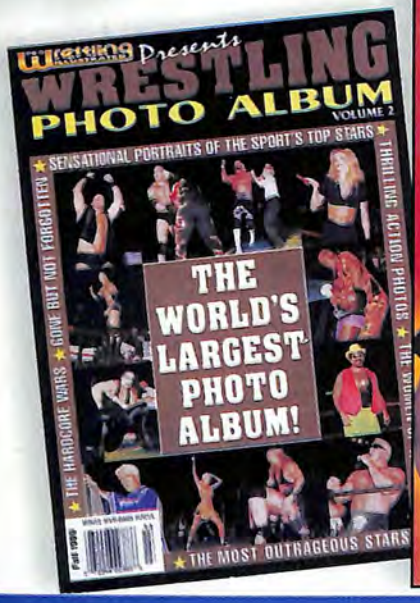

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FROM THE DESK OF...

WHEN SGT. SLAUGHTER denounced his American citizenship a little more than a decade ago and became an at-large member of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard at the height of the Persian Gulf War, we all cringed. Tacky. Bad angle. Poor taste. There was plenty of anger, more so directed at the WWF for pursuing such a storyline than at Slaughter, who was following the orders of his employer.

Slaughter, of course, was not expressing his personal views when he proclaimed during the 1990 Survivor Series pay-per-view that he "salute[s] one flag, and that flag is the banner of the brave Iraqi nation." As detestable and poorly timed as such a statement was, it was just an act.

It was also a mistake, one that the WWF was not about to repeat in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks on our nation. There will be no character who proclaims allegiance to Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda network, no wrestler made to look and sound bin Laden.

But there is Val Venis.

Just a few weeks after the attacks, Venis was interviewed on the chairshots.com radio show and stated that because the U.S. "stuck its nose in the Middle East and created a lot of animosity," we had sealed our own fate with regard to terroristic reprisals. Venis is a member of the Libertarian Party in Canada, whose mission, I'm told, is the reduction of the influence of government in national and international affairs. I suppose that means that we should withdraw support of our strongest strategic ally in the region, Israel, and we should have let Kuwait fall to Iraq and we should not put any pressure on Iraq to stop producing weapons of mass destruction.

We sure don't want to "create animosity."

In fairness, Venis is not endorsing the attacks on New York and Washington; he called the attacks "a terrible tragedy." He is not a bin Laden supporter. He's merely stating his views on why we were attacked, which, in this country, he's supposed to be allowed to do. To state such views at this particular time takes a degree of courage. My biggest problem with Venis is not what he said, but when he said it. There will be plenty of time to debate our role in Middle Eastern affairs. But not now. Not when we're still pulling body parts out of the rubble of what was the World Trade Center and The Pentagon. Not when men and women are risking their lives in Afghanistan trying to eliminate the men who would think nothing of hijacking a plane Val Venis was flying to his next wrestling gig and crashing it into a skyscraper. Not when the country is fearfully awaiting the next wave of attacks.

Maybe Val should tag along with Bill Goldberg and Rick Steiner the next time they take a trip to Lower Manhattan to try to bring a bit of encouragement to the Ground Zero rescue workers, men and women whose memories of these ugly days will probably haunt them for the rest of their lives.

What Venis says should not reflect on the WWF or the views of the McMahon family. It doesn't always work that way, however. (Ask the Atlanta Braves, who once employed a man named John Rocker.) While the McMahons are (for obvious reasons) huge proponents of the First Amendment right of free speech, I think it would be in the interests of all involved for them to tell Venis to put a lid on it.

Stu Saks
Publisher

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LOOK FOR THE MARCH 2002 ISSUE OF *PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED* ON SALE DECEMBER 24, 2001

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Bill Goldberg by Ross Forman

COVER DESIGN:
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Bet you didn't know a noogie could be a fine wrestling move

before the bell

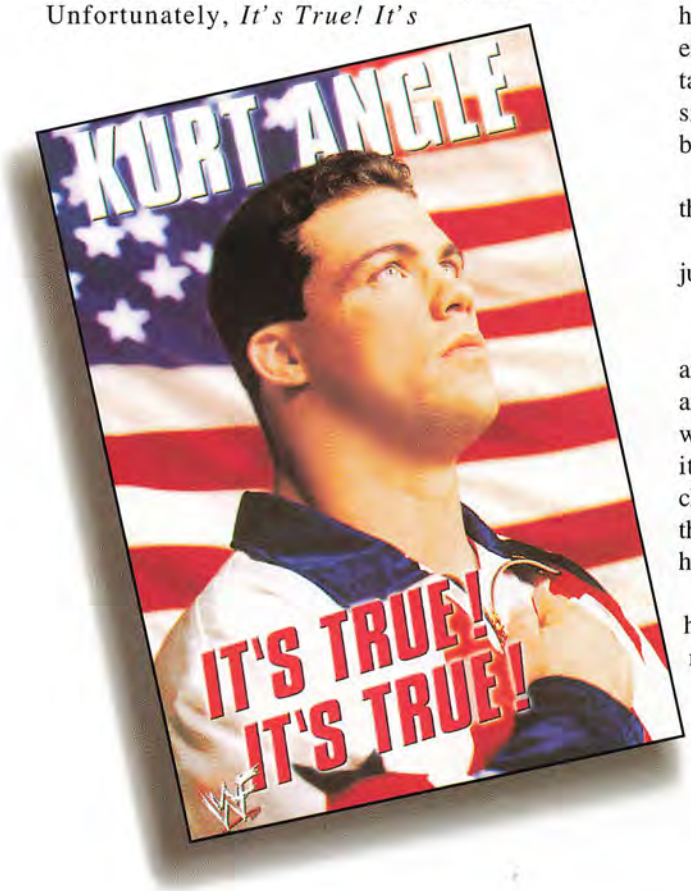
Compiled by Will Welsh

GOLDEN AUTOBIOGRAPHY?

Kurt Angle almost didn't become a professional wrestler. After winning his gold medal at the 1996 Olympic Games, he scoffed at the idea of turning "professional" in the WWF, despite a lucrative offer from the federation. Then, as a guest of ECW, he witnessed Raven stage a mock crucifixion of The Sandman in front of Sandman's young son, Tyler, at the ECW Arena. Afterward, Raven apologized in the middle of the ring, and ECW officials decided to never air the footage. Angle was horrified.

Considering all of that, it's amazing that Angle made it to the WWF at all. But he did, and in his new book, *It's True! It's True!*, Angle details his road from amateur wrestling phenom to professional wrestling superstar.

Unfortunately, *It's True! It's True!* is not one of the stronger WWF autobiographies. That could be because Angle spends ample time recalling his days as one of the world's best amateur wrestlers, but we don't think so. Despite Angle's many accomplishments, the book comes off as dull and devoid of passion at times.



That's a shame, because Angle's story is anything but boring. His father died when Kurt was young, and Kurt buried himself in athletics to cope. Injuries made his life challenging, too. He captured his first NCAA heavyweight championship with a busted up knee. In the semifinals of the 1996 U.S. Nationals, he overcame a three-point deficit to win his match—after suffering a broken neck in the bout. Then he went on to win the final match, too. When he won his gold medal, his neck hadn't even fully recovered *and* he was suffering from a hip flexor. Add in hearty tales about Angle's numerous overseas wrestling excursions, where flea-bitten hovels were the norm, and the book should have been the WWF's best effort yet.

It wasn't, and the swaggering attitude Angle displays throughout the book should shoulder some of the blame:

"You put me in any kind of athletic situation, and I'm just naturally graceful."

"I was also a hell of a baseball player as a kid."

"I'd become champion in 11 months, more quickly than anyone in the history of the World Wrestling Federation, and, I have to admit, it happened faster than I thought it would, and a lot faster than some people probably thought it should have. But what do you do with an Olympic champion who can talk on the microphone, who can make the fans react to him, who can excel in the ring and make his character seem so real?"

As you can tell, at times it seemed Angle was shoving his greatness down the reader's throat—and that doesn't make for an entertaining read. A little more humility would have served Angle well.

We give it 3½ suplexes out of a possible five.

CRAPSHOOT IS MORE LIKE IT

There are a whole lot of wrestling games on the market these days. You can't walk into a video store without seeing "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin or The Rock staring out at you from some game box. The Rock even helped Bill Gates introduce the world to Microsoft's Xbox console way back in January. That being the case, we don't see why you would be inclined to surf on over to www.turnersouth.com and play its wretchedly bad contribution to the genre, Scrapshoot, too often.

But go ahead and do so anyway. The game's free, and if you're reading this, you can't be so busy that you don't have at least a few minutes to kill.

Here's how you play the game. After reaching www.turnersouth.com, you'll click on the WCW Classics button, which is found on the left-hand side of the page. Once there, click on Scrapshoot. After a few seconds, Macromedia Shockwave Player (if you don't have it, go to www.macromedia.com/downloads to download the thing) will open up to the game's opening page.

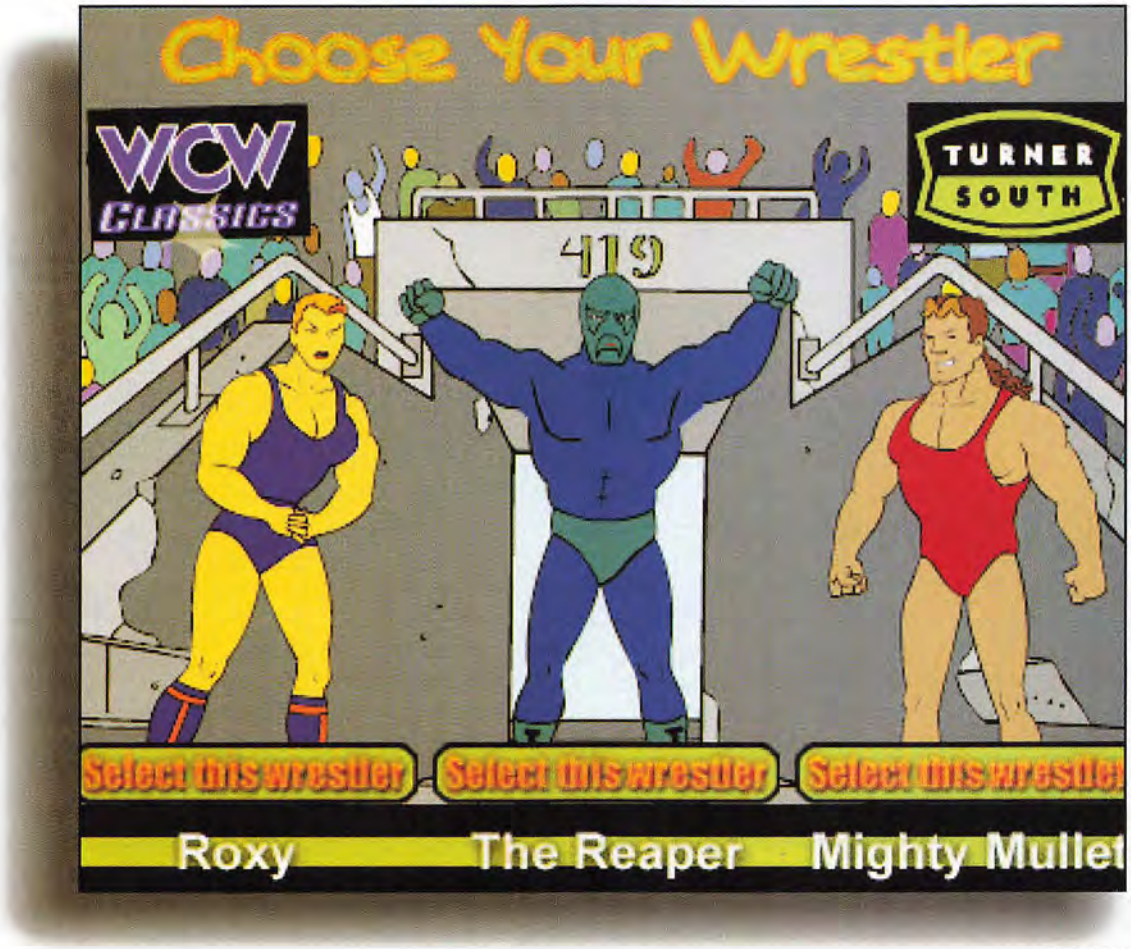
After reading the directions (there aren't many), you'll be directed to choose your wrestler. You have three choices: Roxy, a 6'1", 225-pound resident of the Okeefenokee swamp who speaks with a European accent; The Reaper, a 6'3", 240-pound masked man whose goal in life is to perpetuate evil (really); and The Mighty Mullet, a 6'2", 255-pound stud who is not in any way a ripoff of Mike Awesome.

After you're done selecting your wrestler (it doesn't really matter which one you choose since all three stink), you make your way to the ring. Because the developers of Scrapshoot probably took all their knowledge of wrestling from WCW's New World Order era, you have to dodge flying debris, such as soda, popcorn, and peanuts, on the way to the ring. Anything that hits you takes away from your life force, and you start the first match at a disadvantage. After making it through the angry mob, you start the two-match tournament. The game play is really very simple—it's almost a computerized version of Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots. Pound away on the keyboard—the instructions will have told you which keys to use—to try to employ any sequence of moves: You can punch, kick, punch; kick, punch, kick; kick, kick, kick; or punch, punch, punch. For good measure, you can even throw in a grapple or use your wrestler's special move every now and then.

As you can tell, it's all pretty exciting.

How do you win? Who the heck knows. Our staffers pounded keys in random order until our chosen wrestler, The Mighty Mullet, captured the championship.

One-and-a-half suplexes out of five seems about right.



THE STUPID FILES

•What's up with Tazz? Where's his backbone? The guy is taking beatdown after beatdown at the hands of the Alliance, yet he continues to return to the fold. He never would have done that during his days as the ECW World heavyweight champion. If anyone had tried punking him out back then, he would have strapped on the Tazz-mission and held on until his opponent passed out from lack of oxygen. Nowadays, though, it's like he enjoys receiving beatings at the hands of "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin and Rob Van Dam.

So why does he remain with the Alliance? Well, it's hard to say for sure, but there's a rumor going around that Tazz doesn't want to lose his job as *Smackdown's* color commentator.

Forced to chose between respectability and financial well-being, Tazz chose the latter. Let's hope that the WWF doesn't replace him just for the heck of it in the coming months.

•Remember Greg from *Tough Enough?* He seemed like a pretty bright guy on that show, right? He at least had the smarts to pull out of the competition upon learning that he had three herniated disks in his back. If Greg had continued to try to wrestle on that back, he might have done irreparable damage to himself. Going home was a heartbreaking move, but it was also the right move.

Fast-forward to the weekend following the airing of the *Tough Enough* finals. With Maven and Nidia preparing for their stays in the WWF developmental territories, Greg let the world know that he's not done trying to make his dream come true by showing up at a Combat Zone Wrestling show in New Jersey and attacking "Doomsday" Danny Rose.

While we don't want to begrudge Greg his dream of making it to the WWF, we have to question his decision to start out in ultraviolent CZW. We're curious as to how he reacted to the main event that evening, which saw Z-Barr get covered with chairs tossed from the crowd, then lit on fire in a ring littered with broken glass.

Wonder what Al Snow thinks about Greg's recent career choice.

•September 11, 2001, was a day that changed all of our lives. The WWF chose to air a live *Smackdown* only two days after the horrible terrorist attacks against the United States. Though other media outlets have criticized the WWF for that decision, we believe federation officials made the right call. Americans were in need of a release and a couple of hours of playful entertainment, and for the most part, *Smackdown* provided just that. Lilian Garcia's rendition of the national anthem even left us with goose bumps.

We do wish, however, that the WWF had kept *Smackdown* more traditional. We didn't need to hear Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley compare the events of that day to her father's battle with the federal government, or Bradshaw talk about turning foreign countries into parking lots. Some comments, no matter how heartfelt, need to be edited out every once in a while.

Back to CZW. Following September 11, CZW officials issued a press release regarding the postponement of the promotion's September 15 show, which included

the following excerpt: "We here at CZW feel it would be in poor taste to promote a 200 light tube death match in such a time of tragedy."

Wouldn't that statement have made even more sense if it had ended after the word "match"?

•Main Event Championship Wrestling continues to make silly news. In early-fall, rumors persisted that former New World Order leader Scott Hall would be making his way to the promotion. When asked about the rumors, MECW officials said they weren't sure how Hall's name had gotten tied to MECW, since Hall was not expected to sign or be part of the promotion in the near future.

We're guessing here, but maybe it had something to do with the fact that Hall's name was featured on MECW's Web site.

(Continued on page 10)

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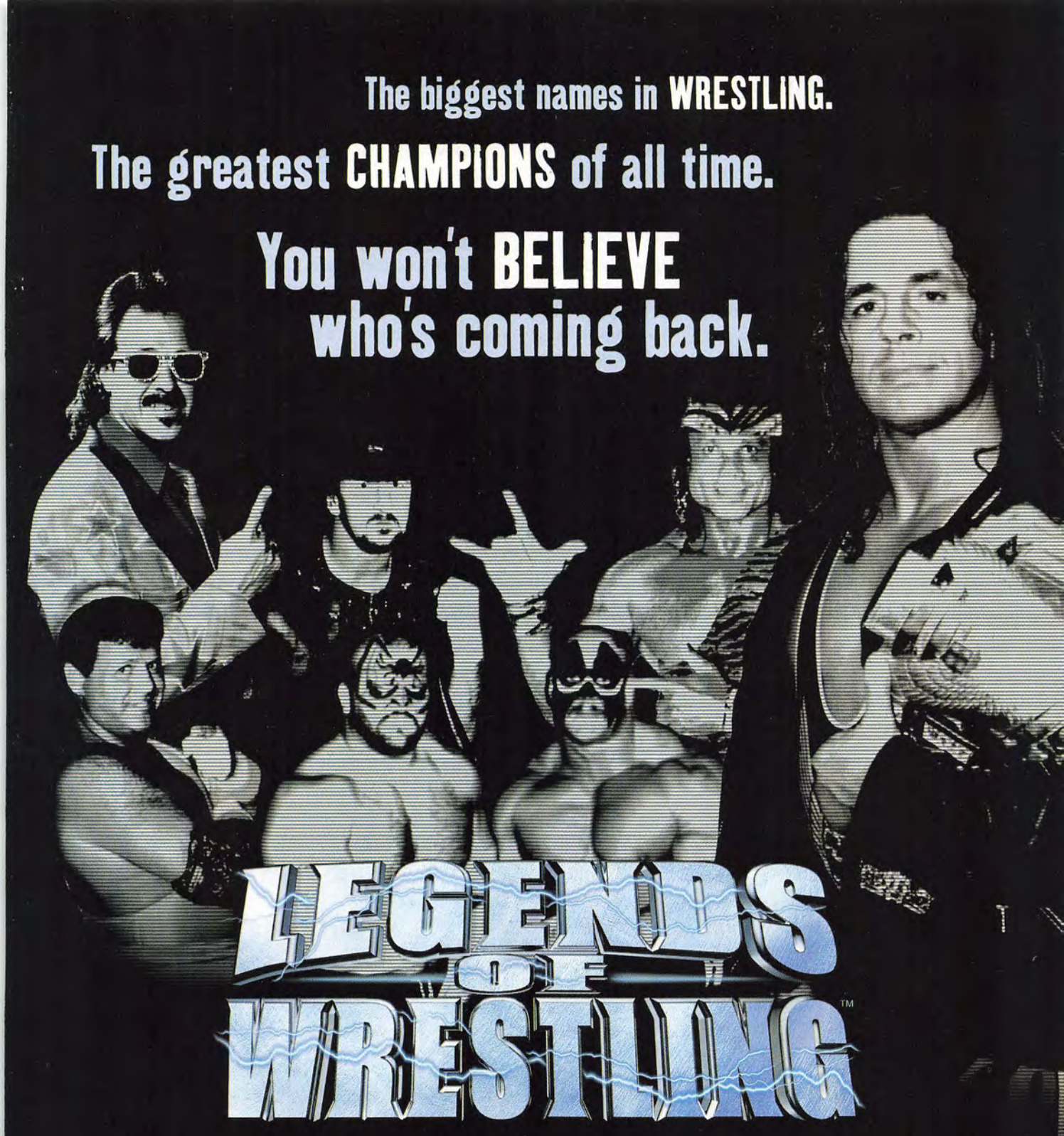

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WE HEARD THAT!

"It was just so surreal. So [expletive] surreal."

—Paul Heyman, reflecting on the terrorist attacks against the United States, in an interview with wcw.com

"Heroes need heroes, too."

—Bret Hart, responding to the terrorist attacks against the United States, in his weekly *Calgary Sun* column

"It's amazing how a worldwide Federation audience has accepted Rob Van Dam. This is a guy who competed in a small organization in ECW, and yet the fans have welcomed him with open arms. It's unbelievable. I can only remember one or two instances in my 16 years in the business where the audience has warmed up to someone this quickly."

—Chris Benoit, in an interview with wwf.com

"WCW was run like an independent circuit with a whole lot of money."

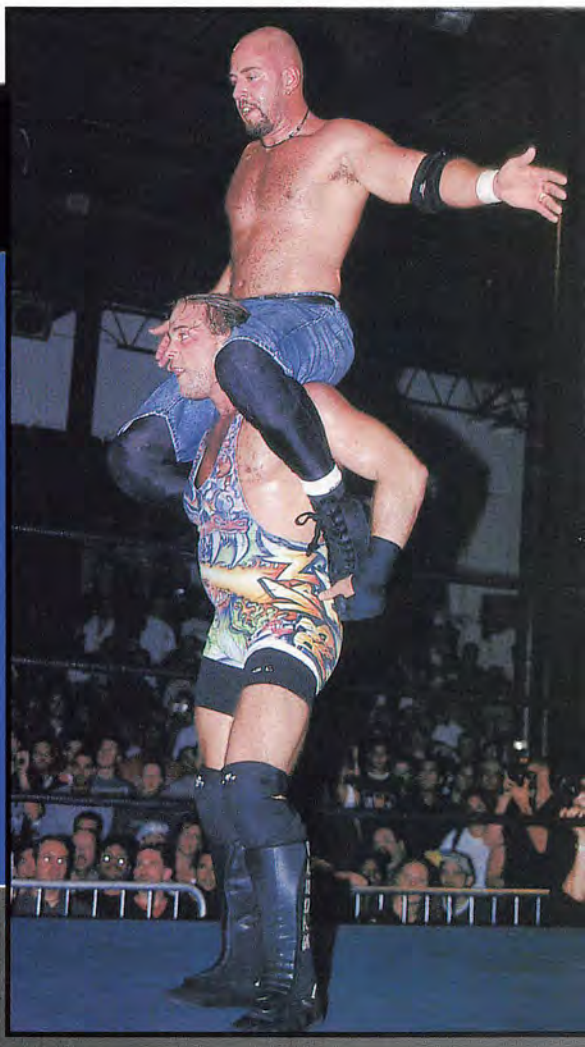
—Booker T, in an interview with Slam! Wrestling

"Mick [Foley] is one of the smartest guys I know, because if you think about it, he got Triple-H over, he got The Rock over, and somebody else, I just can't remember. Most of the time, he was there to get the other guy over and he did it without killing himself—and that takes talent."

—Terry Taylor, in an interview with the *Pro Wrestling Torch*

caption me!

Think you're a better writer than the editors here at *PWI?* Here's your chance to prove it, punk! This picture of Rob Van Dam giving Justin Credible a ride (come on, it does look that way) needs a short, concise, and downright uproarious caption. If you think you're up to the task, e-mail your zany quips to PWIFocus@aol.com or slap a 34-cent stamp on an envelope and drive the postal workers of America even closer to the brink by mailing your suggestions to "Caption Me!" Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Three months from now, we'll share with you the best of the bunch—and the funnier the better.



OCTOBER'S BEST

"See? See?! I *told* you he has a 'Paul Heyman sucks!' tattoo on his back!"
—Robert Payes, West Caldwell, NJ

"Mr. Sandman, bring me a dream. Make her the cutest that I've ever seen ..."
—wgroove1@home.com

"Is that a beauty mark or a tick? Let's burn it and find out!"
—Anneva Williamson, Silverton, CO

"I'm Pimple Poppin' Dudley and I think you missed one!"
—Jack Adlesic, Zanesville, OH

"I say, kind sir, might you have a moist towelette?"
—snrnmnshizit@aol.com

"Here, take my glasses. Maybe he won't hit you anymore!"
—Ambrose Coleman, Tchula, MS

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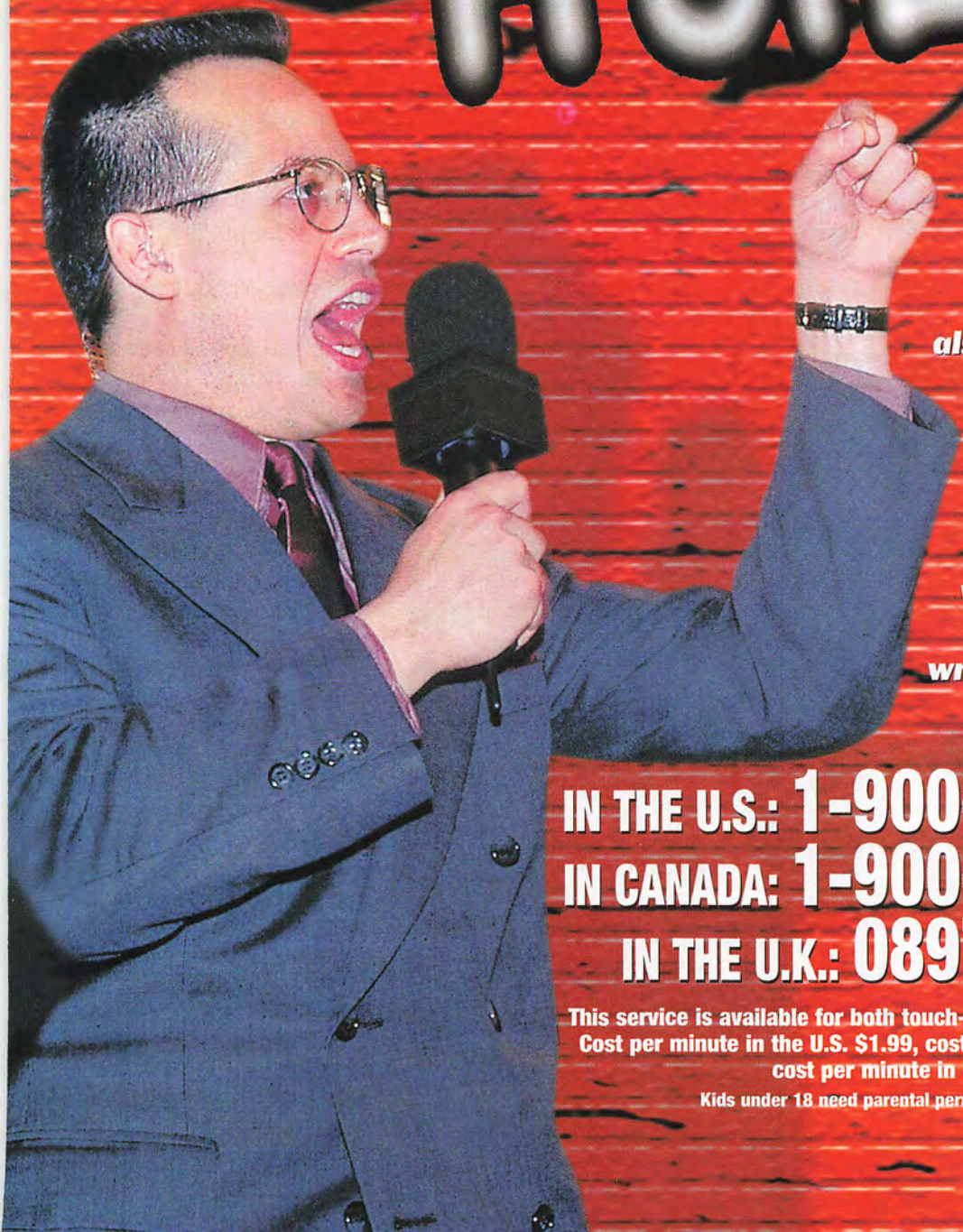

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RINGSIDE

With Will Welsh

Both Helen and Stu Hart have had serious health problems in the last year. Helen slipped into a coma this fall after having a seizure believed to be related to her diabetes. She remained in that coma at press time.

AS 2002 INCHES ever closer, it looks as if **The Outsiders, Kevin Nash** and **Scott Hall,** are preparing themselves for a return to the World Wrestling Federation. Hall is currently competing in New Japan Pro Wrestling, where he is chipping off the rust against stars like All-Japan Triple Crown champion **Keiji Muto.** Nash, who remains under contract to AOL Time Warner until December 31, 2001, has already stated that he wants to team with Hall shortly after that contract expires. In fact, he plans to wrestle with Hall on New Japan's January Tokyo Dome show, which is generally NJPW's biggest show of the year.

Nash has also mentioned something about wrestling on an Australian wrestling tour after that, but we think he's just covering up his true intention. On his Web site this summer, Nash said the following: "I'm really looking forward to being an Outsider again."

Nash can wrestle with Hall all over the world if he wants to, but we all know that he'll never be an Outsider again until he's teaming with Hall in the United States. And since there's only one major U.S. promotion currently active, he must mean that he and Hall are looking to return to the WWF. It should be pretty easy for them to get in, too.

If the WWF ever wants to launch WCW/ECW as a separate promotion, it's going to need big stars. Hall and Nash, no matter how controversial, are two of the biggest stars this sport has seen in the last 10 years.

The question is, when they do return, will they side with the WWF or the Alliance?

Or is the New World Order truly for life after all?

Is it about time for the band to get back together? How about two of the leaders of the band at least? Scott Hall remains a free agent, and Kevin Nash will become one on January 1. Anyone think The Outsiders wouldn't be interested in invading the WWF?

More and more it seems as if the Hart family is cursed. On September 28, **Helen Hart,** the Hart family matriarch and mother to **Bret** and **Owen,** suffered a seizure and fell into a coma. As this issue was going to press, Helen hadn't yet regained consciousness, but family members were still hopeful.

"Everyone is very optimistic, and the specialists tell us nothing has happened that she can't recover from," son **Keith Hart** told the *Calgary Sun.*

Hart's family believes that her diabetes sparked the seizure. She was returning from a trip to California, and "extra security at [Los Angeles International Airport] meant she was there for many hours and became dehydrated and her blood sugar was way out of whack," Keith said.

Earlier this year, Hart's hus-

band, the legendary **Stu Hart**, was hospitalized with heart problems and pneumonia.

In NWA news, **Baron Von Meaner** suffered a concussion at the hands of **Bobby Collins** after Collins put him through two tables. As a result, Von Meaner was experiencing short-term memory loss as this issue went to press ... **The East Coast Connection, J.T. Wolfen** and **Sickdog**, continue to dominate NWA Hawaii as that promotion's tag team champions. They're even having a hard time finding opponents from what I hear ... Former WCW personnel keep finding their way to NWA Wildside. **Scott Hudson** has joined Wildside announcer **Steven Prazak** in calling matches on occasion, and **Robbie Rage** (formerly of **High Voltage**) and **Lodi** wrestle for Wildside. Writer **Ed Ferrara**, who is best remembered for his short stint as **Oklahoma**, has begun making appearances in Wildside, too. He's even gotten back in the ring and wrestled. That's just what all of us were waiting for.

This isn't exactly a wrestling item, but remember "He Hate Me" of XFL fame? Well, **Rod Smart** ("He Hate Me's" given name) recently turned up on the Philadelphia Eagles' practice squad. There's still no word on exactly who "He" was ... Don't expect to see **Kronik—Brian Adams** and **Bryan Clark**—back on WWF TV anytime soon. WWF officials soured on them after their poor performance at the Unforgiven pay-per-view against **The Undertaker** and **Kane**. Clark has left the company, while Adams agreed to go to OVW ... **Chris Benoit** remains on track for a spring 2002 return following neck surgery ... Former ECW color commentator **Joel Gertner** has landed a new gig as an actor. He'll play the role of a sports announcer in the movie *Penmanship* ... **Sean O'Haire** has been sent to Ohio Valley Wrestling to get some seasoning. I still think he's going to be a major player one day.

Reckless Youth will be absent from the indy scene for a while, as he is trying to rehab a back injury. He's hoping to be back in action in early-2002 ... Congrats to **Ronnie D. Lishus**, who beat **Gino Martino** to win the Chaotic Wrestling heavyweight title ... Could **Jerry "The King" Lawler** be on his way back to the WWF soon? That's what a lot of people were asking when Lawler showed up backstage at *Smackdown* on September 17. (It was being taped in Lawler's hometown of Memphis.) Lawler was trying to smooth things over with a few people in the company, but his return does not seem imminent.

(Continued on page 86)

Both of these men have been sent to the WWF's developmental territories to improve their games. However, Sean O'Haire is a lot more likely to get called back up by the WWF than Brian Adams is.

In focus

By Dave Lenker

Is it the mission of everyone in the WWF to humiliate Tazz? It almost seems that way given the odd way in which he has been portrayed on WWF TV lately.

DETAILS, DETAILS

You love 'em or you hate 'em, right? You might be the kind of wrestling fan who tunes in to *Raw* on Monday and *Smackdown* on Thursday night for the sole purpose of being entertained. Intense matches, interesting interviews and promos, scantily clad women, oddball comedy. You like some or all of the elements of a WWF show, and when it ends, you either liked it or you didn't. You don't really care to think about why. You don't look at quarter-hour ratings breakdowns. You don't analyze the shows at all. You watch. You enjoy.

Or you might be the kind to look at *every* little detail of every show you watch. You look for trends in ratings and try to figure out why the numbers for the third quarter-hour were lower than those for the second. Was it the star power involved in the second quarter-hour ... or the lack of star power in the third? Both perhaps? Or do numbers typically slip as you move from the second to the third quarter-hour?

I can see why some people insist that you don't enjoy the shows nearly as much when you analyze them ad nauseum.

But since analyzing this stuff is part of my job, and since I do find it enjoyable, I continue to do it. And recently I've come to the conclusion that the WWF creative team needs to analyze the shows more carefully and pay closer attention to detail. Too many things on WWF TV have been left unexplained. For instance ...

•**Why did Vince McMahon disappear from WWF TV as soon as the Alliance invasion moved into full swing?** Shouldn't he be right there in the middle of it all, encouraging the WWF troops. If not, why not?

•**Who decides whether to assign a WWF or WCW referee to a match between a WWF star and an Alliance member?** There was a time when WWF referees resented and hated WCW officials, and vice versa. Now they're almost interchangeable, although Nick Patrick is occasionally an anti-WWF heel referee. Any why is he only an occasional heel? In some matches, he shows no bias whatsoever. And don't get me started on what is and isn't grounds for disqualification anymore. I think the rules change from match to match.

•**If this is still supposed to be an Alliance invasion, why are Alliance stars booked to co-host shows such as *Excess* and *Sunday Night Heat?*** The NWO may have done more harm than good to WCW in the long run, but at least Hall and Nash weren't in studio joking with Tony Schiavone and Mike Tenay two months after they began their hostile takeover of the company.

•**What's up with Tazz?** Maybe this will all be clear by the time you read this, but as of the end of September, I was thoroughly confused. First he looks like he's ready to stand up to Steve Austin, then he takes a beating from him and proudly claims he

Let's see, Chris Jericho lost a big match to Rob Van Dam at Unforgiven and got an I-C title match the next night, yet a month earlier, he beat Rhyno at SummerSlam and was "rewarded" the next night with a match with Test. Doesn't make much sense.

deserved it. Then he goes back to running interference for him, only to stand up to Austin and tell him he thinks Kurt Angle might just kick his ass at Unforgiven. Then he's humiliated by the Alliance, only to go back to praising Austin again for being such an inspirational leader within a week. Where is this going?

•**What is the real rule on the hardcore title?** If it's up for grabs 24/7, that's simple enough. But lately I've seen a number of matches involving Rob Van Dam that have been deemed non-title bouts. Okay. But then on the night RVD lost the belt to Kurt Angle on *Raw,* he regains it by falling on top of Angle after both are tossed off the stage by Steve Austin. Does a 24/7 most-of-the-time rule make sense to anyone?

•**If Kane can speak and function as a normal human being now, what's the reason for him wearing the mask?** All of a sudden, speaking wasn't a problem for him. He was even doing commercials and cracking jokes. I think I'll continue to harp on this point until we get to see his face. With Kane's popularity fading a bit, isn't now as good a time as any?

•**What happened with the feud between Steve Austin and Debra?** Wasn't she hitting him with a cookie tray a few months ago? Did we miss their reconciliation?

•**Why was there no transition between RTC Ivory and the sexy Ivory we see back on TV today?** I know all the members of the group were bickering when last seen together and Steven Richards mentioned that he got Kronik to target The Undertaker because 'Taker made such a strong effort to tear down RTC. Fine, but what about the conservatively attired Ivory who was so irate about the other WWF divas flaunting their bodies? She just disappeared and was replaced by the old Ivory, the one who wore tight leather pants and flaunted her body as much as other WWF divas. Just because RTC is no more doesn't mean she wouldn't (I'm thinking logically here) still believe in its causes. Maybe if she came out and said the group brainwashed her, this all would make sense. But she didn't.

•**Why was Kronik signed when other former WCW stars like Ric Flair and Jeff Jarrett are still sitting home collecting Time Warner paychecks?** This one isn't for the creative team, I suppose. Maybe Vince McMahon himself needs to answer this one. Maybe he did when he fired Adams and Clark a few weeks after hiring them.

•**Why don't match results mean more?** More specifically, why don't pay-per-view results at least mean more? We're reminded often in the days following pay-per-views who won what title, but shouldn't there be rewards and punishments for those who win and lose the other bouts? For instance, Lance Storm lost the WWF Intercontinental title to Edge at SummerSlam. The next night, he got a shot at the WCW World title. Wouldn't Chris Jericho, who *won* against Rhyno at SummerSlam, have been more deserving? He got a forgettable match with Test instead. At Unforgiven, Jericho lost to Rob Van Dam. The next night, he received an I-C title match against Christian. Maybe that match should have gone to Perry Saturn, who beat Raven at the pay-per-view and didn't even get a match on *Raw* the next night.

Not paying attention to details like these will certainly not kill the WWF, but for those of us who look at the little pictures as much as the big picture, things like this make us think a bit too much. And who really wants to think while watching wrestling?

If there's anything *you've* seen on WWF TV lately that you feel needs an explanation, I'd love to hear from you. You can send your ideas to "In Focus," Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034—or you can e-mail me at the address below.

(Have a comment or question about "In Focus" or anything else you see in ***PWI?*** *You can contact Dave Lenker via e-mail at PWIFocus@aol.com.)* □

Off the TOP ROPE

By Brandi Mankiewicz

If you wish to contribute to Brandi's mailbag, send your letters to:

TOP ROPE
Box 1148
Ft. Washington, PA 19034

Or send e-mail to:
OffTheTopRope @yahoo.com

(Editor's note: The opinions in this column are those of the letter writers and Brandi Mankiewicz herself. They do not necessarily reflect the editorial views of this magazine.)

*WRESTLING SEEMS SO insignificant right now. With all that is going on in the world, it's silly for people to be worrying about who was higher than who in the "**PWI** 500," or why Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley got zeppelin-sized boobs.*

*The only thing worse than listening to idiots debate these subjects is reading Phil Mushnick's drivel lambasting the WWF for its September 13 **Smackdown** broadcast. While I didn't agree with the WWF doing the show beforehand, I did end up watching it because I could not bear to watch any more MSNBC. It ended up being two hours of escapism that was done in relatively good taste, save for Stephanie's bizarre speech.*

Will life ever get back to normal given what happened on September 11? Probably not. Our whole world has changed. Evil abounds, and as much as you might think I like that, the loss of emergency personnel and innocent lives is something that I could never joke about. Just as in wrestling, evil needs to have a genuine purpose for screwing with normalcy. There was no purpose for this. Wrestling is all fun and games. When people start losing their lives, that's something else entirely.

One thing does remain the same: I will always be your champion.

Dear Brandi,

I would be very interested in hearing your opinion on Kevin Von Erich, the last surviving member of the Von Erich wrestling dynasty. Most noted for his aerial ability and the fact that he competed in his bare feet, Kevin, in my estimation, was the best wrestler in his family, as well as the kindest, most noble human being. Your thoughts?

LISA ELLY
Perry Hall, MD

Dear Lisa,

Kevin is a living reminder of how the excesses of professional wrestling can destroy you. If it wasn't for his domineering father, pretty boy brother Kerry, and family name that was pushed beyond belief, we wouldn't be having this correspondence about Kevin Von Erich. It's amazing that you could have mentioned his numerous title reigns in World Class as a noteworthy item, but instead, you can only remember his bare feet. The sad reality is that Kevin was only as good as his opponents, and once Gino Hernandez died, there was little, if any, real competition left in Texas. Kevin's wrestling career is best left as a distant, fuzzy memory.

Dear Brandi,

How dare you put down these beautiful women of wrestling? The truth is, even Mae Young in her youthful days was better than you in your fantasizing thong bikini. Heck, even I'm better looking than you. I'm 5'6" and weigh 170 pounds, but I can bench press 235 pounds and squat 315 pounds for 10 reps and behind-the-neck press with 155 pounds for reps as well. If you can top that, then you're better than me. But then pigs will grow wings and fly.

It sure feels good to be the man.

XAVIER LEPE
Phoenix, AZ

Dear Xavier,

I find it interesting that you list your vital stats for comparison to mine, since common sense says that we shouldn't be judged by the same criteria given your male name. Truth is, nothing about your body-building resume is impressive. If you're a girl by birthright, then, yes, those numbers are somewhat impressive if you're just getting started. If you're actually a guy, I'd suggest buying a dress to go with that girly-man reputation that you'll get by having those numbers appear in my column.

Someone asked for my opinion of Kevin Von Erich. One good thing I can say about him is he always looked good while getting beaten up by my all-time favorite wrestler, Gino Hernandez (proudly pictured).

Dear Brandi,

I am a huge fan of the WWF, but I must say that I don't like what has become of The Undertaker. Don't get me wrong—I still think he is a kick-ass wrestler, but c'mon, his entrance music is Limp Bizkit, and he comes down riding a Harley! What happened to the Prince of Darkness? I think we need to bring him back. It also kind of takes away from how menacing Kane can really be when you have him come down to "Rollin'" along with The Undertaker. I'm sure there are a lot of fans would like to see the Prince of Darkness re-emerge.

FRANK PALFALVI
Detroit, MI

Dear Frank,

I agree with you that The Underredneck needs to die again, but I think his crappy music is the least of his problems. It's actually appropriate to have a bad song introduce a lousy match. Everyone knows that he's dying with his goofy "American Badass" gimmick. And he looks moronic walking to the ring with Kane, who is still dressed in his post-fire attire. I respect him as a veteran wrestler who has done much in the past to advance rulebreaking, but his new persona really does nothing for his career. I liken his new, hip persona to an 80-year-old great grandmother wearing hip hugger jeans and a belly shirt. No matter how you look at it, it's a nasty vision.

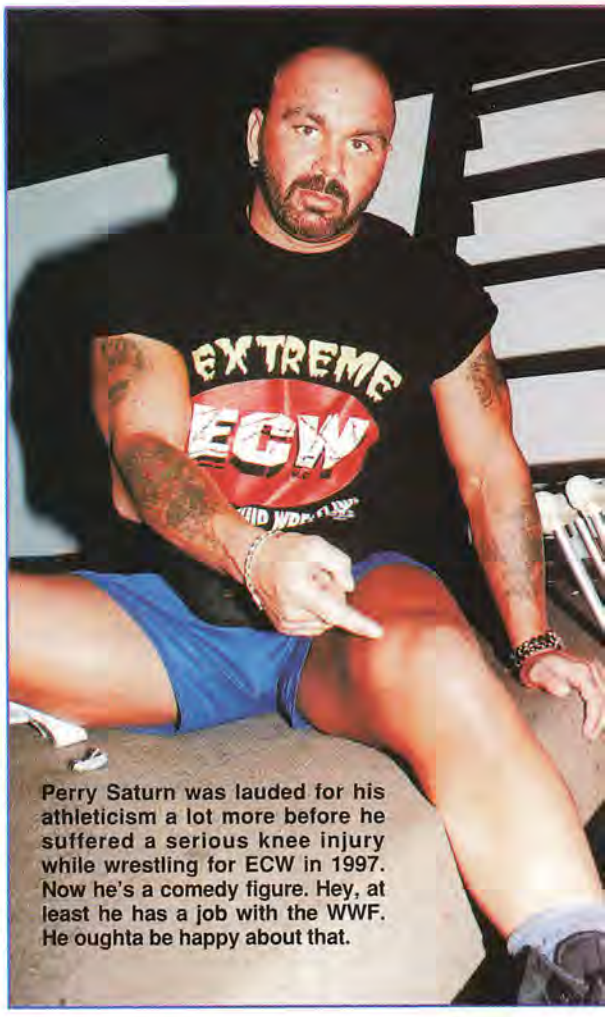
Dear Brandi,

I think I've just about had enough with blatant misuse of talent on the part of the WWF. I thought the late-Turner-era WCW was bad, as it saved the main events and the heavyweight championship for the dinosaurs! But Vince McMahon should have more sense. Look at what he has: The Big Show, a man he won't even bother making a star; Tazz, a guy whose character transformation since January 2000 is totally sickening; and Jericho and Benoit, who haven't been allowed to hold on to the WWF title for more than 10 minutes! But you know what sickens me the most? Having an accomplished athlete like Perry Saturn carrying around a mop. Now you tell me: Are Vince, J.R., and company simply resting on their laurels, or do you honestly think that this is the right way to run a wrestling company?

DAN WRAY
dan.wray@ntlworld.com

Dear Dan,

When I think of Perry Saturn, "accomplished" and "athlete" aren't the first two words that come rolling off my tongue. Yes, he was one-half of the storied Eliminators. But what has he done since? His career never recovered after he blew out his ACL and cracked his left knee and tibia back in 1997. He rushed back from reconstructive surgery, and I think it greatly affected his career. As for every other name you listed, I'm sure the WWF has a good reason for using them the way they do. That reason might not make sense, but it's a reason. Honestly, I think the WWF just has too many guys on its roster and not enough creative people in the creative division to come up with great ideas for everyone.



Perry Saturn was lauded for his athleticism a lot more before he suffered a serious knee injury while wrestling for ECW in 1997. Now he's a comedy figure. Hey, at least he has a job with the WWF. He oughta be happy about that.

Letter of the month (taken verbatim from the actual letter to share my torture with you all):

HEY BRANDI WHEN DOES WRESLING 'S STORY LINE GO FROM "JUST A STORY LINE "TO REAL LIFE? HOW COULD STEPHANI MCMAHON HEMSLEY GO FROM PLAYING TRIPLE H'S WIFE TO ACTUALLY BREAKING UP TRIPLE H & CHYNA THIS TO ME SOUNDS LIKE THE WWF STORYLINES ARE GETTING SO SHALLOW THAT THEY HAVE TO BRING REAL LIFE INTO IT. TELL ME ONE GOOD REASON WHY THEY HAVE TO TAKE THE STORYLINES SO FAR THAT THEY ACTUALLY BROKE UP TWO VERY NICE PEOPLE. IN CONCLUSION, I THINK THAT WWF CAN DO BETTER THAN DESTROYING TWO PEOPLES LIVES.

WILLIAM WILD
wild@hickorytech.net

PS. HOW DO I GET IN TOUCH WITH CHYNA ?

HEY WILLIAM,

Did you ever stop to think that maybe Hunter found Stephanie to be a better all-around woman for him? Maybe he didn't like dating someone who could bench more weight than him. Maybe Chyna was distraught when The Kat was fired and became disillusioned with her life on the road. Maybe Stephanie is just the perfect woman for Hunter. Heck, what better way to start off a relationship than with a marriage? As for getting in touch with Chyna, I suggest heading to a beach somewhere in California, getting into a dingy, and paddling west. It may take you a while to meet up with China, but at least it will keep you away from me for a little while. □

buzz cuts

By Liz Hunter

SMH and RVD. Oh, what I would pay to have Rob Van Dam look at me like that! Do you remember the first hint of attraction between Van Dam and Alliance co-owner Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley? It happened in a hallway, that casual glance that turned into a long, simmering gaze.

We've seen the relationship develop over the past few weeks. The two are discussing strategy. Stephanie arrives at ringside for RVD's matches. Van Dam protects her from harm.

So how is this different from Stephanie's prior relationships in the WWF? First, there was the fairy tale relationship with Test, the young WWF hopeful who wanted nothing more than to hold hands with Steph and wait patiently as she picked out the perfect wedding gown.

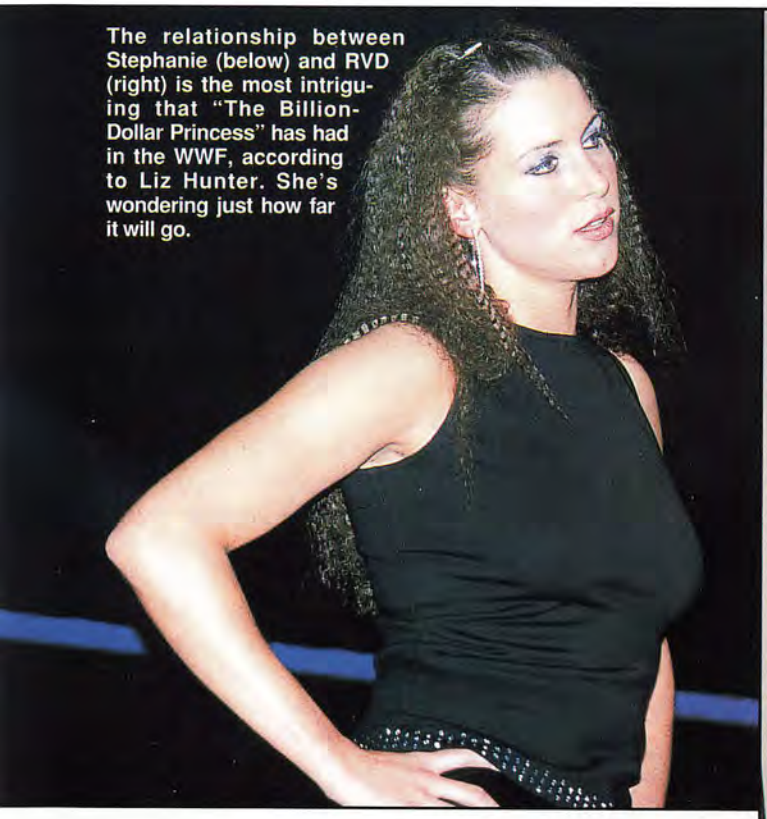
Second, there was the power union. It was taken verbatim from a soap opera. Triple-H was the physically powerful, tremendously ambitious villain who hooked up with Stephanie, the relatively wholesome girl who embodied just enough resentment to be dangerous.

Stephanie must have been in her teenage crush phase when she fell for Kurt Angle. And why not? Angle was the all-American boy, complete with gold medals and Olympic hero status. He's the type who would get her cat out of a tree, then take her to a G-rated movie. He looks the part of a hero, and Steph felt proud walking alongside him. But Angle was caught up in his self-created morality, with a purpose higher than a mere woman.

Where does Van Dam fit into this? This is Stephanie's lust relationship. Steph doesn't want to write love letters to Van Dam. This is pure sexual attraction. Let me put it this way: GTV cameras would be wise not to follow them too far.

What?! That's the word you hear when Steve Austin appears in front of any arena crowd these days. Gone are the chants of "Stone-Cold! Stone-Cold!" or "Aus-tin! Aus-tin!" The feverish embrace of Austin is now replaced by goofy, sporadic shouts of "What?!"

Fortunately, I've heard from a reliable source that the well-paid team of Hollywood writers and wrestling know-



The relationship between Stephanie (below) and RVD (right) is the most intriguing that "The Billion-Dollar Princess" has had in the WWF, according to Liz Hunter. She's wondering just how far it will go.

it-alls in the creative department did not come up with this concept. What?! It's a catchphrase of Austin's own making, a product of his own fertile mind.

What?! You heard me. Yes, this is the same man who designed the skull-and-crossbones motif for his character, who thought of "Don't trust anybody!" and launched himself into superstardom by telling Jake Roberts, "Austin 3:16 says I just whupped your ass!" What?! This is the same man who made himself a multimillionaire based on his good marketing ideas.

Sometimes it's the simplest ideas that catch on with a crowd. I'm sure the What?! T-shirts are being produced right now.

But what does "What?!" mean exactly? It could mean, "Slow down, I'm too stupid to understand what you are saying." It could mean, "I'm a stupid redneck who doesn't understand the English language." What?!

Here's my interpretation of What?!: It means, "I'm so far above you in terms of physical ability and intellect and I have such a direct focus on my goals and aspirations that I can't waste a precious synapse in my brain to attempt to comprehend anything you idiots are saying."

What?! A good catchphrase embodies a certain type of spirit or attitude within just a few words. What?! could be an example of Austin at his creative peak. When was the last time a wrestler invented a catchphrase consisting of only one word? When has a wrestler said so much by saying so little?

Should we call it the Super 4? The Delaware-based East Coast Wrestling Association has long been regarded as a beacon of scientific wrestling, a welcome respite from the soap operas airing on Monday and Thursday nights. It secured this reputation by establishing the Super 8 tournament, an open invitational to junior heavyweights throughout North America.

On September 22, I saw something that might qualify as the Super 4. It was a tremendous four-way main event in Wilmington, Delaware, featuring ECWA champion Scoot Andrews, Christopher Daniels, American Dragon, and last year's Super 8 winner, Low-Ki. I've never seen such parity, in terms of scientific ability, in any promotion. In this competitive environment, I'm surprised Andrews has retained the heavyweight title this long.

The match is being hailed as a *PWI* Match of the Year candidate (though it's unlikely to win since it won't ever be shown on national TV), and this type of action is sprouting throughout the continent. There's a junior heavyweight renaissance on the West Coast as well, boasting familiar names such as Chris Daniels and American Dragon, in addition to Tony Kozina and Chance Beckett.

American Dragon takes out Chris Daniels and Scoot Andrews at the same time during a dramatic four-way ECWA bout also involving Low-Ki. Liz is lauding this bout as the best match of 2001 that you probably *didn't* see.

Any millionaires considering a real national startup should watch these matches and see the potential for a new, fresh product. It is so far removed from the WWF that you would think they're participating in a completely different activity. In a sense, they probably are.

Quick cuts. I would have loved to have seen the expressions on the faces of Brian Adams and Bryan Clark when, after their ugly outing at Unforgiven, WWF officials suggested the veterans move to Ohio Valley Wrestling for "some seasoning." Adams is apparently going to do it so he can continue to collect paychecks … Christian's new, operatic entrance music is having a strange effect on *PWI's* editors and writers. I questioned staff members individually, and they all admitted hating it at first, but a few of them are now acquiring a taste for it. Kind of like deep-brewed coffee, I guess … I commend the countless independent promotions who are demonstrating, each in its own way, appreciation for the U.S.A. and the brave firefighters and police officers who dealt with the September 11 terrorist attacks. □

strange list of the month

FIVE THINGS THAT PROMPTED BOOKER T TO SAY, "TELL ME YOU DIDN'T JUST SAY THAT!"

1. Stevie Ray will be entering the WWF with Booker's new hair style
2. Shane McMahon arrived with camouflage paint muttering something about "G.I. Bro"
3. Didn't Bob Backlund stare at his hands the same way a few years ago?
4. Sucka-tash will not be a WWF New York menu item
5. Dig what?

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PWI'S STATE OF THE GAME ADDRESS

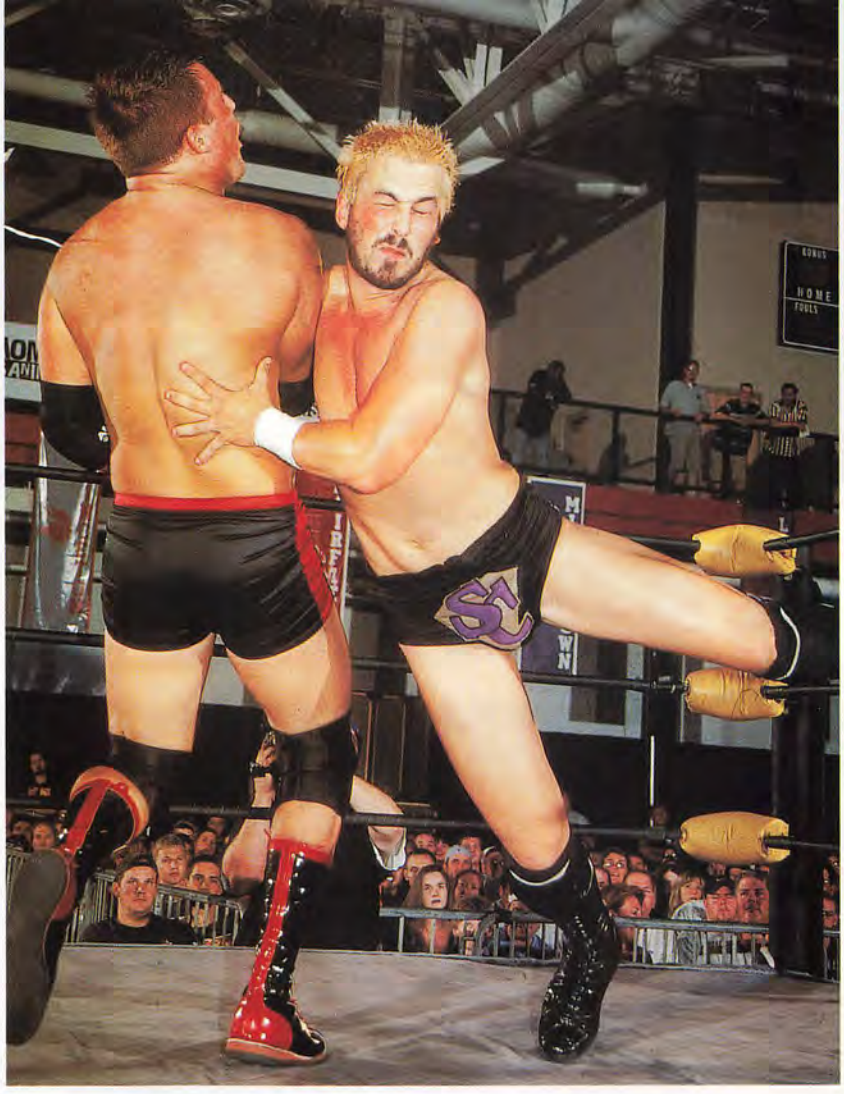
THROUGHOUT ITS HISTORY, professional wrestling has been fraught with up periods and down ones. Those in the industry throw the word "cyclical" around a lot when trying to describe the phenomenon. In some ways, the notion is kind of comforting. Even in wrestling's darkest days, fans and insiders could always say to themselves, "The sport may be in a rut now, but it will rebound; it just needs time to recover and reinvent itself and get hot again." And it always did. There were so many people and promotions working to keep it strong and healthy that it couldn't remain too far down for too long.

When entering into an any kind of discussion, analysis, or conversation regarding the state of wrestling, you don't have much choice but to start with the McMahon family. As they go, wrestling goes.

But as you know, things have changed. A new era has dawned in professional wrestling, and it's the era of the corporate giant. The WWF now rules all. WCW and ECW have been reduced to being mere underlings in a WWF storyline. WCW and ECW wrestlers are now used to drive WWF ratings and pay-per-view buy rates and boost ticket sales. In the grand scheme of things, WCW and ECW are now more comparable to famous cliques like DeGeneration X and the New World Order. Promotions all unto themselves they are not.

They could be, though. Or at least they could band together and start a brand new promotion. That was the hope of WWF officials when the federation first acquired WCW, and it remains the hope of the WWF even today. Vince McMahon sure didn't spend a couple of million dollars just for storyline purposes.

"The State Of The Game," however, just doesn't cover the state of the WWF. The WWF may be North America's largest power, but where



It's so hard to predict the state of the future when things chance so rapidly now. A year ago, Steve Corino was on top of ECW and reportedly being looked at by WCW. At press time, he was preparing for what he said would be his final matches.

would the fed be without the vital independent circuit to help train tomorrow's stars? The majority of today's WWF superstars got their start wrestling in front of only a handful of fans, and that's where the next crop of young studs is currently residing. The Heartland Wrestling Association and Ohio Valley Wrestling are the two most prestigious indy federations, but that's because they're official WWF developmental promotions.

There's also a slew of other well-respected federations that aren't officially sponsored by the WWF, such as the promotions that make up the National Wrestling Alliance. A stronger independent coalition doesn't exist. We'll examine the whole independent scene and break down how its current events will shape the sport's future.

There are other things to consider, too. Take the situations in Japan and Mexico, for example. Both of those countries are experiencing their own problems. Japan's situation actually mirrors the WWF's current state of affairs. All-Japan was left in a shambles following the defection of Mitsuharu Misawa and many of its other top stars. Before long, All-Japan had begun working with long-time rival New Japan. Pro Wrestling NOAH is doing the same.

Now a New Japan wrestler, Keiji Muto, is the All-Japan Triple Crown champion. No matter what else happens, that fact alone has forever changed the face of Japanese wrestling. We'll explain the consequences.

We have plenty of other "States" to guide you through as well. "The State Of The Business" will crunch the sport's financial numbers and tell you what they all mean. "The State Of The Art" examines how the sport is being contested these days. Are we really going to see fewer high spots in the future?

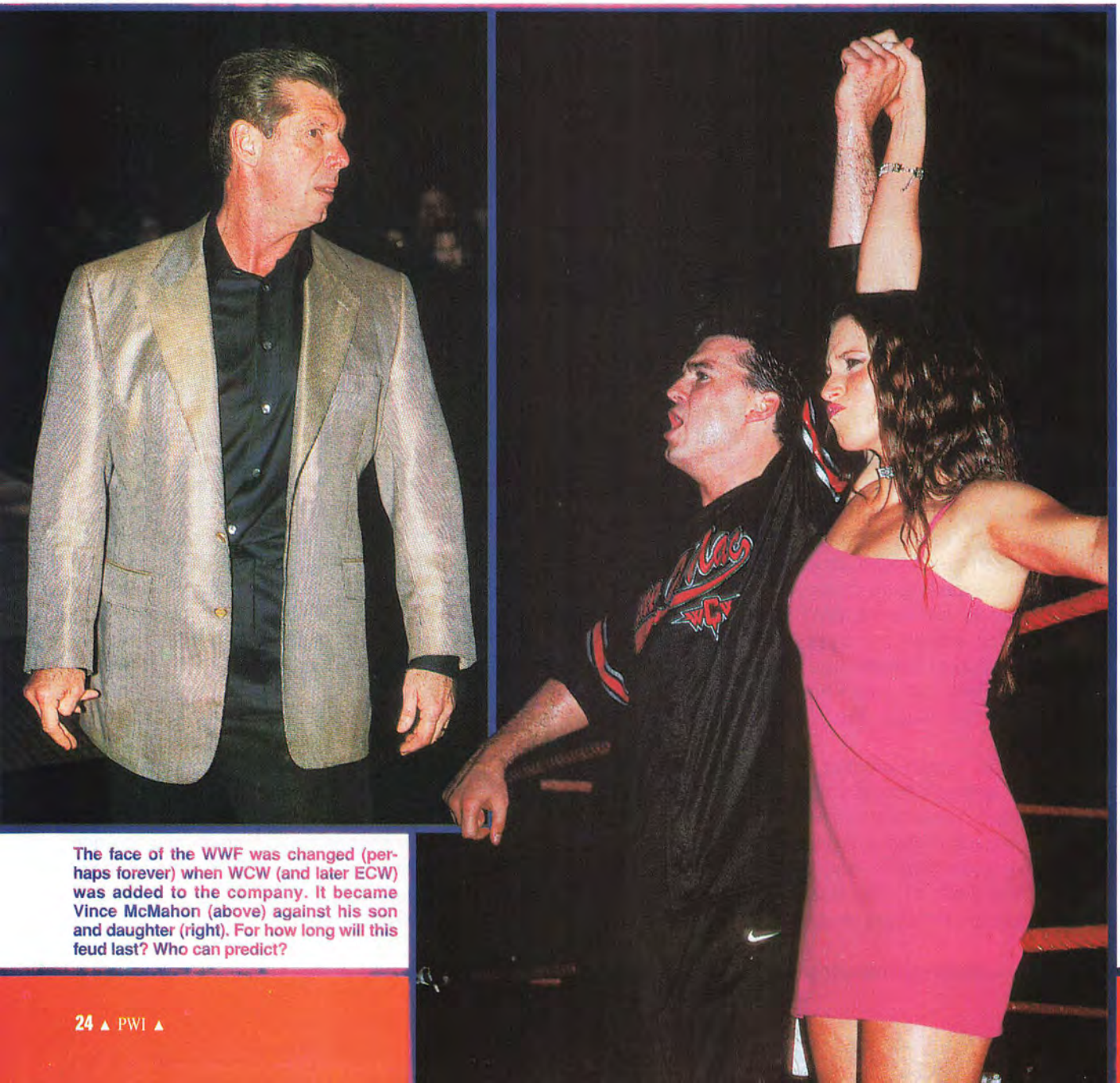
We'll also tell you where we think the sport is headed. Last year, we didn't do so well, saying that "all promotions should be at least somewhat optimistic about wrestling's future." Considering that ECW folded and WCW was sold to the WWF last year, our prognosticating skills have to improve this go-round. Read the "State Of The Future," then check it a year from now to see how we fared.

Then there's the "State Of The Stars." Every star we examine is currently being featured on WWF TV except one—and Steve Corino announced his retirement just before press time (we'll see if it sticks). That kind of close-knit situation breeds either one of two things: jealously or unity. Our in-depth analysis will describe what every star is capable of—and where they're all headed.

"The State Of The Game" changed a lot in the last 12 months—more than anyone could have predicted—and it will have altered once again a year from now. For now, though, what you're about to read is the most current evaluation you'll find on the sport. Enjoy.

As state of the WWF goes, so goes the state of the North American wrestling industry. As long as the McMahons remain passionate and smart about what they do, things should be fine. But they do have critical decisions to make

THE STATE OF THE WWF



The face of the WWF was changed (perhaps forever) when WCW (and later ECW) was added to the company. It became Vince McMahon (above) against his son and daughter (right). For how long will this feud last? Who can predict?

The Alliance is clearly large enough to break away from the WWF and become a separate promotion under the WWFE banner. But are there enough true stars?

"The day of small nations has passed away; the day of empires has come."

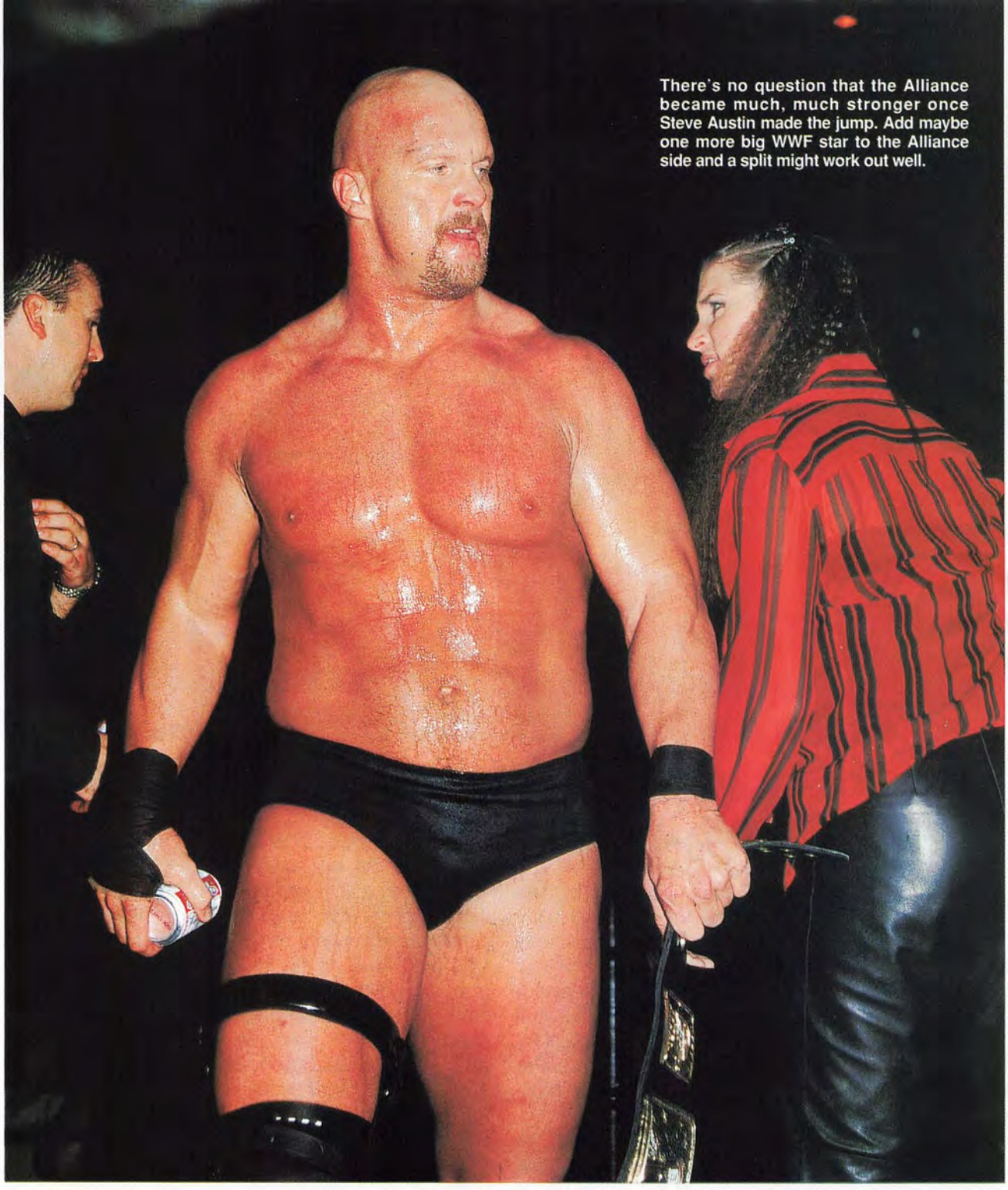
—Joseph Chamberlain

VINCE McMAHON SPENT the better part of his adult life trying to obtain a monopoly in the wrestling business. This spring, he finally achieved that goal when he bought the World Wrestling Federation's most persistent and longest-standing rival, World Championship Wrestling. With that purchase, McMahon assured himself a competition-free environment for at least the immediate future. For American wrestling fans, it pretty much became WWF or bust.

That's why, in regard to this special *State Of The Game* issue, the whole blasted thing would be a moot point if it wasn't for the existence of the World Wrestling Federation. As unfortunate as it may be, the state of the WWF undoubtedly represents the state of the industry as a whole. Independent wrestlers can claim they wrestle for the love of the sport until they're out of breath, but we all know that at least 75 percent of indy wrestlers never would have gotten into the sport if it hadn't been for the possibility of one day wrestling for a major federation. These days, that's the WWF. Why put your body on the line when you know there's no hope of ever getting on national TV and receiving a decent paycheck for it?

At least the WWF seems to be on solid footing. Some of its financial indicators may be down, and ratings for *Raw* and *Smackdown* may not be what they were a year or two ago, but WWFE is still taking in bundles and bundles of money. People forget that the ratings the WWF is currently pulling in for its programming, while notably lower than a year ago, are still considered unbelievably strong by cable-TV standards. In fact, when *WCW Monday Nitro* began hitting 4s in the late-1990s, the program was considered a monumental success. Right now, *Raw* still flirts with 5s on occasion.

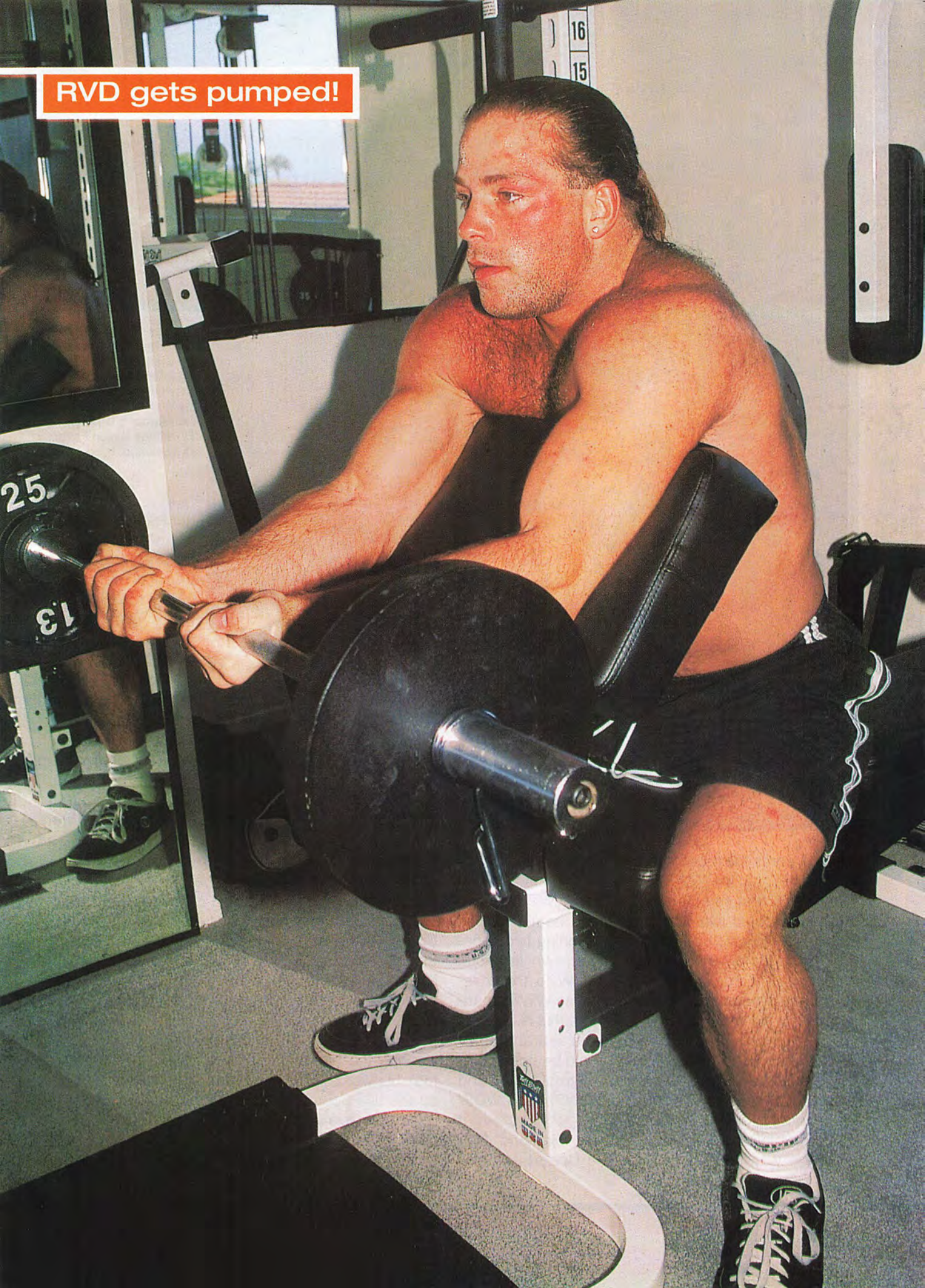
Does the WWF have its problems? Of course it does—it's a professional wrestling company. Live gates are down, and pay-per-view buy rates might soon be as well. (Notice how the WWF has taken to plugging ticket on-sale dates on TV, which was something it didn't need to do a few years ago.) Everyone has to realize, though, that the down periods the WWF suffered in the past, such as in the early-'90s, won't happen again unless the bottom falls out of the sport entirely. In fact, a sure sign of the WWF's unbelievable success over the past few years is that the down period it's experiencing right now would have

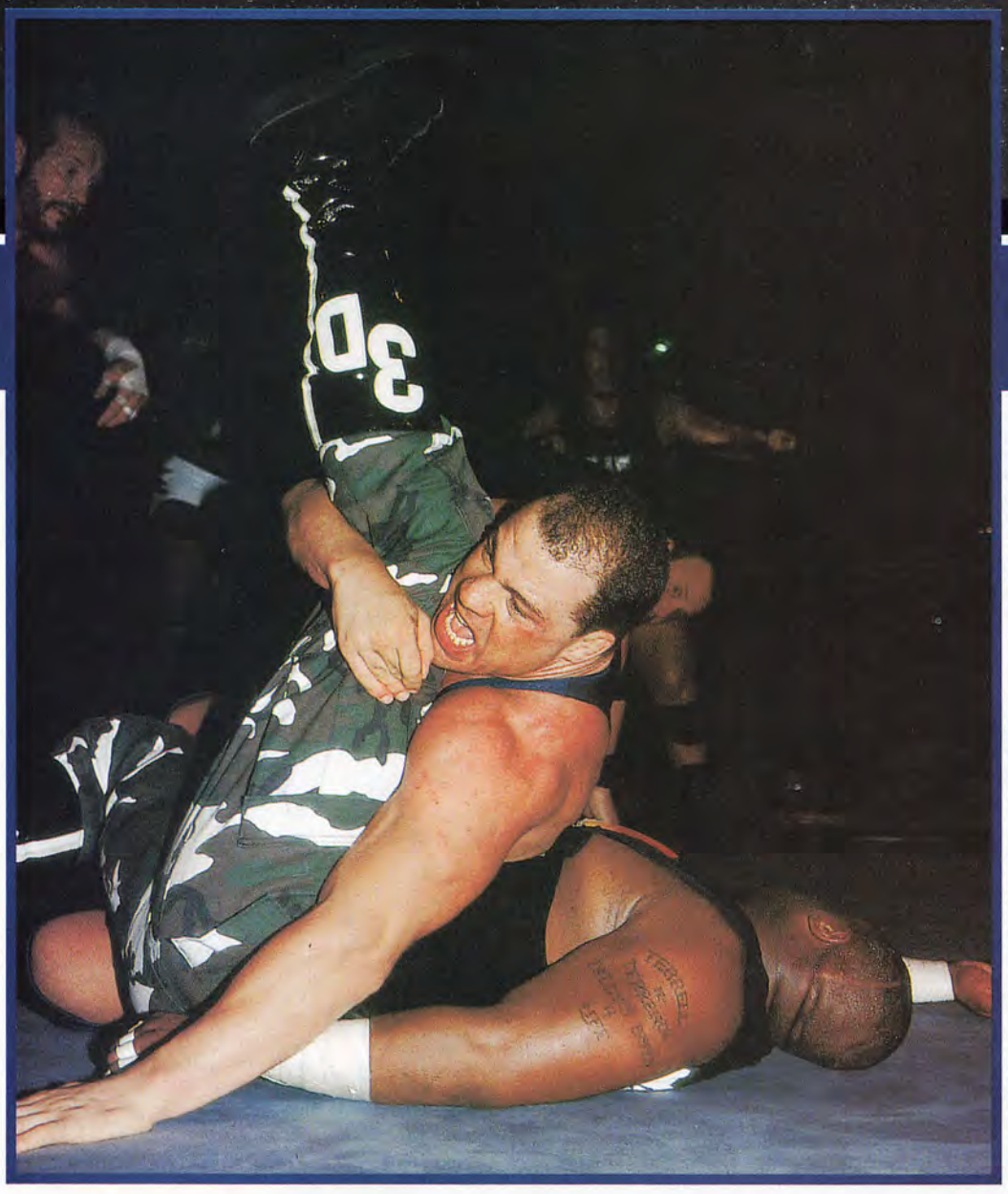


There's no question that the Alliance became much, much stronger once Steve Austin made the jump. Add maybe one more big WWF star to the Alliance side and a split might work out well.

been considered an astoundingly strong period only 10 years ago. Ten years ago, people probably didn't think a wrestling program could achieve such numbers—let alone the numbers of 1999 and 2000.

At no other time in its history has the WWF been so stocked. Just take a gander at the WWF's two most important possessions: WCW and ECW. Though the WWF botched the invasion storyline at the beginning, it certainly made amends by introducing ECW into the mix and giving the storyline a bit of an edge. Before ECW surprisingly entered the foray, the WCW invasion storyline was set to fizzle out and go down in history as one of McMahon's worst flops ever. Now, however, the storyline is on course to help launch a second promotion sometime in the next six months or so. Slowly but surely, the WWF built up the Alliance, and it did that by following a known and well-tested blueprint. It ripped off the U.S. military's formula of humiliating new recruits into absolute nothingness, then building them back up in the manner in


RVD gets pumped!



Despite the fact that the WWF has been featuring what should be electrifying interpromotional feuds between superstars like the WWF's Kurt Angle and the Alliance's Dudley Boyz, TV ratings haven't exactly skyrocketed.

which it wants the recruits to see themselves.

And, boy, did the WWF ever need to do that. When WWF fans first rejected WCW, the WWF had two choices: It could just dump the brand name from all storylines and give up its dream of running two separate promotions, thus creating their own financial streams, or it could repackage WCW to try to relaunch the promotion at a later date. The WWF smartly chose to go with option two. And as this issue was going to press, it appeared that the rebranding of WCW was going about as well as could be hoped.

Because WWF fans didn't want to treat WCW and most of its wrestlers seriously, the WWF made WCW into exactly what WWF fans had come to believe it was: a bumbling joke of a promotion. "Diamond" Dallas Page was booked against The Undertaker and made to look like an absolute buffoon. Booker T, who had been criticized for being too Rock-like when Time Warner owned WCW, mutated into the official version of Rock-lite at the federation's urging. Other WCW stars with potential, such as Shane (The Hurricane) Helms, Chris Kanyon, and Shawn Stasiak, were given the go-ahead to act even quirkier than normal. Eventually, their antics became so laughable that the Alliance was in jeopardy of losing every ounce of its respectability.

Of course, that's right about the time when "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin jumped ship to the Alliance (taking the WWF World title with him) and The Rock captured the WCW World title. It might hurt a lot of old-time WCW fans to have to admit it, but it took a WWF wrestler the caliber of The Rock to give the WCW title meaning in the WWF. And it took more than just Rock wearing the belt to the ring to help re-establish it. It took his words and his attitude, too. If Rock had spat on the title upon winning it, WCW could have kissed itself goodbye because the title would have meant nothing in the future.

The Rock didn't do that. Instead, he proudly de-

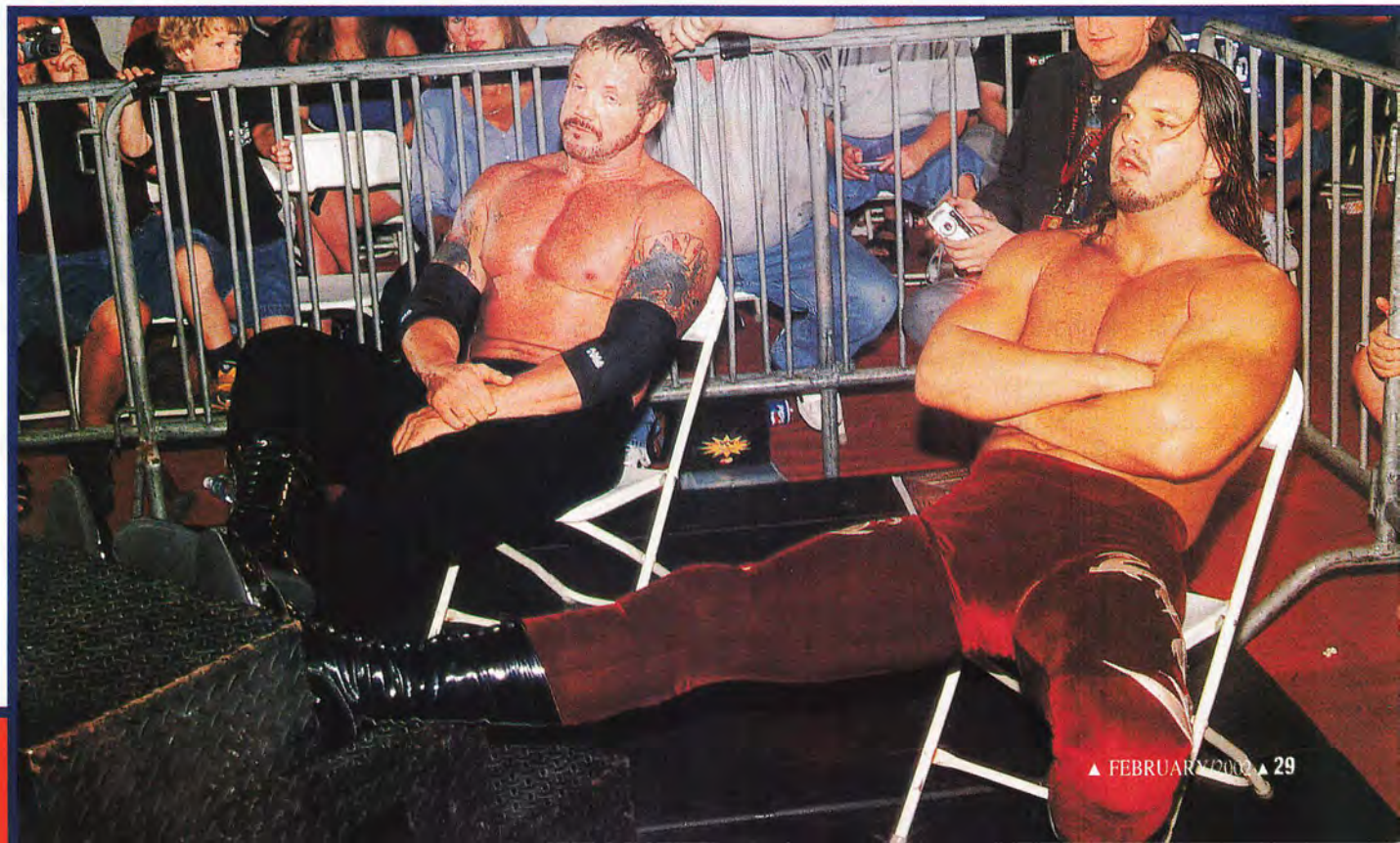
With the combined WWF/ Alliance roster being so huge, establishing yourself in that prestigious top tier is not easy. Just ask Chris Jericho, who despite being amazingly popular, only gets brief stays there.

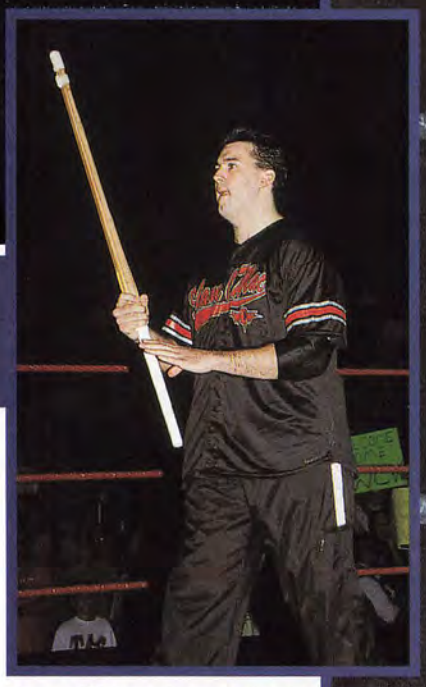
fended the title, not to make the Alliance proud, but to show respect to those who had held the belt before him. By showing reverence for the title and its history, Rock let it be known to WWF fans that the WCW title was something to hold in high regard, even if the rest of the Alliance wasn't.

Austin also had a big part in establishing the Alliance. Because "Stone-Cold" led the group, WWF fans had to respect it. Austin's presence in the Alliance helped legitimize the threat to the WWF. Rob Van Dam's performances and personality also bolstered the group's sorry reputation. RVD's popularity, despite his affiliation with the heel faction, also let WWF officials know that the Alliance's taint wasn't so strong that it couldn't be removed. The addition of Test to the Alliance demonstrated the group's increasing power and attractiveness to disgruntled wrestlers.

And even though Kurt Angle beat Austin for the

DDP and Kanyon were two of the first WCW stars to invade the WWF. Unfortunately, it became obvious to most watching soon enough that they weren't serious threats to most WWF stars. The perception of WCW as a whole by WWF fans has to be changed.





As exciting as he can be to watch when he wrestles, Shane McMahon has yet to prove he can run his own promotion successfully. The ECW crew had to be added when it appeared a separate WCW run by Shane O'Mac was turning into a huge bust.

The WWF hasn't made a lot of strides in the tag team division in the last year. Most of the top teams now—like the Dudleys and Hardys—are the same teams who were on top a year ago.

WWF World title just before this issue went to press, there was talk that a weekly Alliance-only television show might come together shortly.

Of course, in order to launch a new promotion, the WWF needs to have its logistics in order. Launching a wrestling promotion with a global reach is not something you can just throw together overnight—even though that's exactly what the WWF tried to do initially. It's a good thing the fed learned its lesson. Now when McMahon does decide to split the Alliance off from the WWF, the infrastructure will be in place to accommodate the move rather easily.

The WWF already has TV time lined up; it just needs to figure how to divvy up its current programs. *WWF Excess* will surely be looked at. So far, it's been a huge ratings disappointment. If federation officials don't want to give up either *Raw* or *Smackdown* to the new promotion, the Alliance can easily take over *Excess.* Its late-Saturday night time slot might not be the strongest from which to launch a new promotion, but it's not the worst, either. (Relaunching WCW from either *Livewire* or *Superstars,* which were canceled in

The roster has become so crowded that a pay-per-view match pitting Raven against William Regal—two very talented stars—usually receives very little hype beforehand and is forgotten just days after the show.

August, would have been much worse for business.)

And if Shane and Stephanie McMahon can somehow manage to retain the services of Austin, what wrestling fan won't go out of his or her way to catch the program? Even if you're not home on Saturday night, you're still going to tape it. Of course, all this *Excess* talk could be a moot point if the WWF decides to give the new promotion its *Raw* time slot, which was the plan this summer and still might be the number-one option.

It sounds strange that Vince McMahon would give up his prized Monday night time slot, but the idea isn't without merit. Because it used to be primarily a country music channel (and because the channel's programming, other than the WWF, of course, still tends to stink to high heaven), TNN's subscriber coverage isn't what USA's was. Its coverage isn't bad; it's just not the best the WWF has ever had.

Smackdown's Thursday night time slot on UPN, however, might be perfect for the WWF, should it decide to relinquish *Raw.* It's a broadcast time slot, which is more prestigious than a cable time slot. Also, McMahon would probably want to put the stronger drawing of the two shows, which would have to be the WWF's show at least initially, up against the killer Thursday night network competition (i.e *Survivor, Friends, ER).*

If the WWF decides to split its two prime-time programs, it leaves open the possibility of turning *Excess* into something truly innovative. It could become a *SportsCenter* of sorts for the wrestling industry. The results of *Raw, Smackdown,* and pay-per-views could be covered on the program, but so could WWF developmental territories like the Heartland Wrestling As-

If you want to be a player in the WWF today, you better be at the top of your game. Officials weren't happy with the Undertaker and Kane vs. Kronik match at Unforgiven. As a result, neither Brian Adams nor Bryan Clark is expected to wrestle in the WWF again.

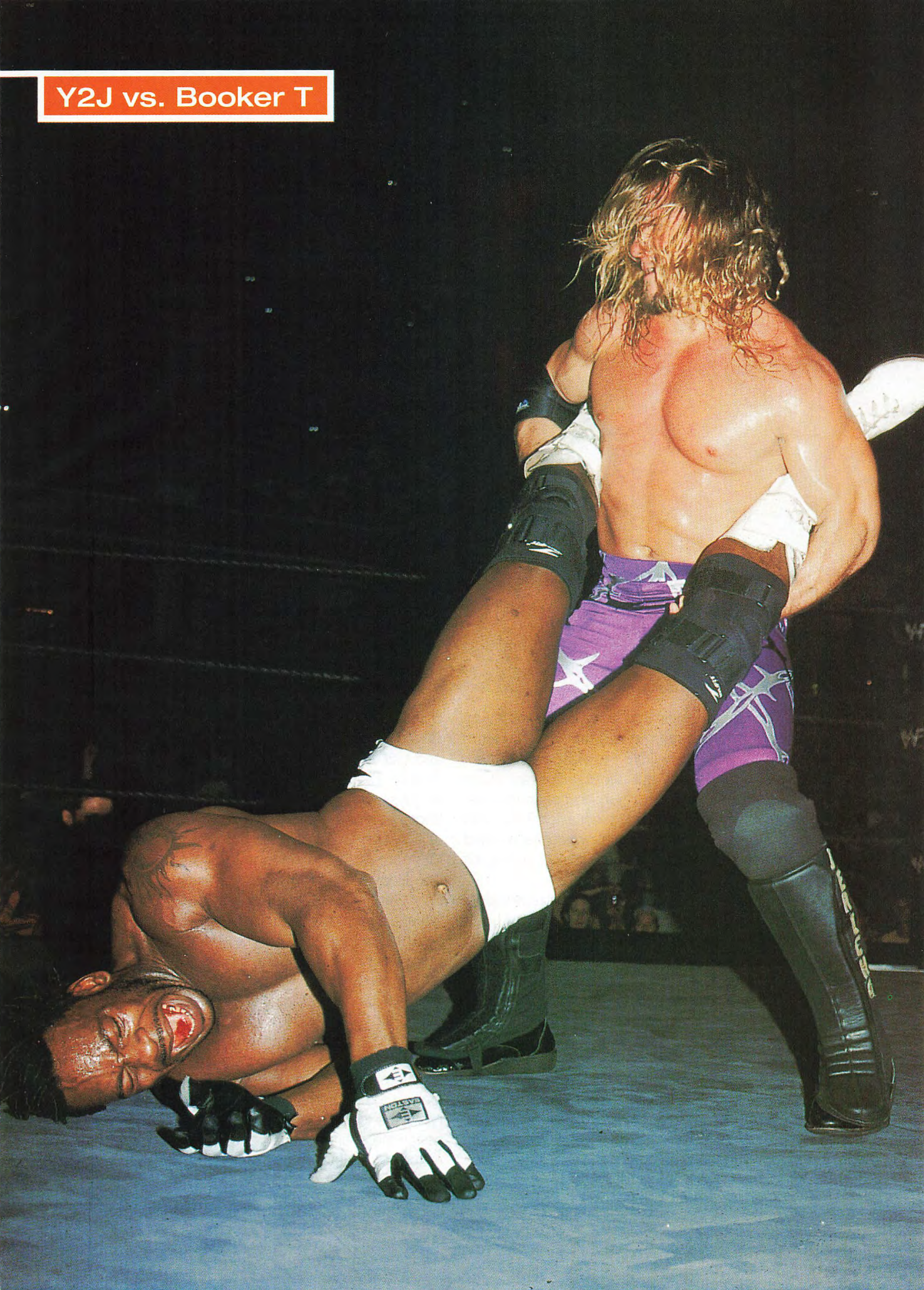
sociation and Ohio Valley Wrestling. It could turn into a magazine show in its truest form.

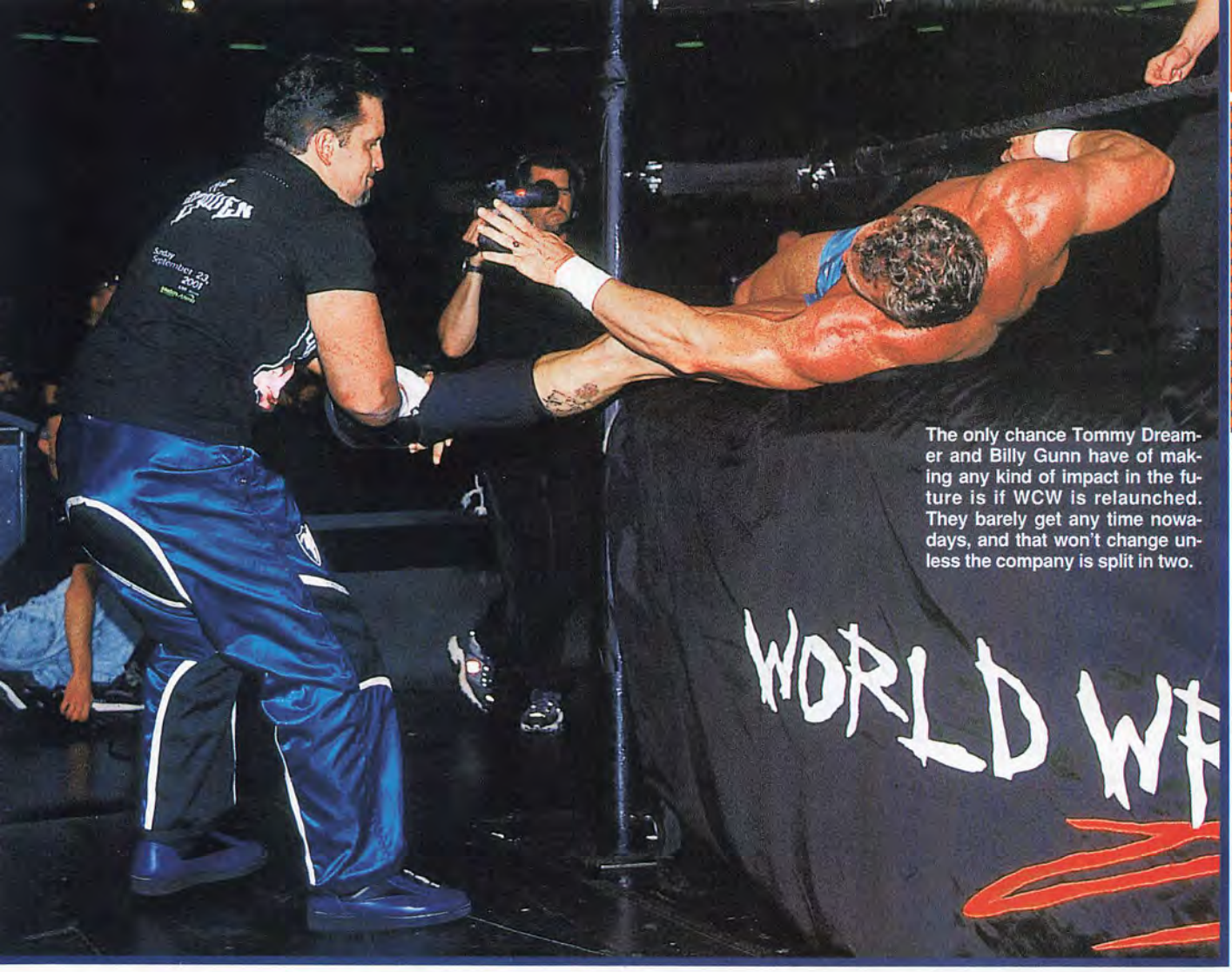
The WWF also doesn't have to worry about trying to organize a touring schedule for the new promotion once it kicks off. With so many wrestlers on its roster, the WWF planned to start running two shows per day on the weekends in order to keep them all happy and well-paid. (Most of the wrestlers' contracts call for them to earn more money as they work more house shows.) When the WWF purchased WCW, a large number of WWF wrestlers who had been featured regularly on TV were pulled off to make room and time for the WCW (and later ECW) wrestlers.

If the Fed didn't start running two shows per day on the weekends, too many long-time WWF wrestlers would have been making their guaranteed minimum salaries and not much more. (As an added bonus, the WWF should also see its weekend profits increase, as it will now running four shows instead of two per weekend.)

Splitting up *Raw* and *Smackdown* between the two promotions would also seem to be good for business in other ways, too. Remember the days when feuds would drag out over a period of a few months ... maybe even a year? Guess what: if you've been a fan for only a few years, you don't remember those days. The WWF's storylines move so fast nowadays that you're not too sure when exactly they began and why they started. All you know is that you're watching a match on pay-per-view that was seemingly thrown together at the last instant. Then, before you know it, the two wrestlers have moved on to new feuds.

Taking either *Raw* or *Smackdown* away from the WWF and giving it to the upstart promotion would greatly help the creative team pace things over a longer period of time. No longer would they be forced to move along storylines just because they needed to fill TV time. Characters would be able to develop at a slower pace, as would feuds. Though soap operas and wrestling do have their differences, they also have their similarities. One of the things that keeps


Y2J vs. Booker T



The only chance Tommy Dreamer and Billy Gunn have of making any kind of impact in the future is if WCW is relaunched. They barely get any time nowadays, and that won't change unless the company is split in two.

soap fans coming back is that they can step away from their soaps for months at a time, only to return and know what's going on within the first 30 seconds.

While wrestling fans may not necessarily want storylines to develop that slowly, a return to continuity over long stretches of time might help turn occasional fans into everyday, ticket-buying fans. All that would be needed would be two stables of wrestlers capable of pulling off some long-term storytelling.

The WWF certainly doesn't lack for a talent pool around which to work its storylines.

Back when WCW was being invaded by the New World Order, that promotion was credited with having the deepest roster ever assembled. The WWF's current roster blows that one away—and federation officials are expected to hire even more former top WCW names in the months to come.

Just look at the overall roster as we headed into fall. Its top tier consisted of Steve Austin, The Rock, Booker T, Kurt Angle, and an injured Triple-H. Just below that group were The Undertaker, Kane, Chris Jericho, "Diamond" Dallas Page, Rob Van Dam, and an injured Chris Benoit. Just further down in the pecking order were Edge, Lance Storm, The Acolytes, Tajiri, The Hurricane, Chris Kanyon, Rhyno, Christian, X-Pac, William Regal, The Hardy Boyz and Lita, The Dudley Boyz, Test, The Big Show, Spike Dudley, Tazz, and Albert. Then you had the WWF's glut of guys who rarely make it onto *Raw* and *Smackdown* because of the overcrowding: Kaientai, Chavo Guerrero Jr., Justin Credible, Raven, Perry Saturn, Chavo Guerrero Jr., Mike Awesome, Steven Richards, Scotty Too Hotty, Crash and Hardcore Holly, Tommy Dreamer, Billy Gunn, Bull Buchanan, Val Venis, and The Goodfather—and that's just to name a few.

And the roster is only supposed to get more impressive. Kevin Nash, Scott Hall, and Scott Steiner are all rumored to be joining the WWF's roster shortly as well. Maybe Jeff Jarrett and Rey Misterio Jr., too. Maybe even Ric Flair and Hulk Hogan. The only thing wrong with that roster is the bottlenecking at the top, but that's solved by splitting it in half when WCW relaunches. Even if you split that roster into two equal ones, you'll still be looking at two of the strongest rosters in the sport's history. All the top tier guys should be around for a while, and nearly the entire second tier of performers could step up at any given time. Vince McMahon will have just about

everyone he wants!

Of course, all of this praise leads to a couple of questions: Is the WWF too big and strong for its own good? Does it need outside pressure from a rival organization to actually be successful? Does Vince McMahon need to be pushed by a legitimate rival?

Look for a second invasion of sorts early in 2002, as Scott Hall and Kevin Nash are expected to show up (above). Rey Misterio Jr. (right) is another possibility.

The answers you get will depend on whom you're asking. Former WCW President Eric Bischoff, for one, would probably answer yes to both queries. He pushed McMahon in a way he had never been pushed before.

At the time that the New World Order was running roughshod over WCW, *Nitro* looked like an unbeatable ratings juggernaut. The NWO vs. WCW storyline was so compelling that it didn't look like *Nitro* would ever relinquish the ratings crown to *Raw*. It eventually did. A lot of the blame for that went to WCW's *too* talented roster. With Nash, Hall, Hulk Hogan, Sting, Randy Savage, and Lex Luger sitting on top of the pile with nowhere else to go, there wasn't room for anyone else to advance.

WCW grew complacent. The storylines got twisted and turned until they no longer made much sense, and more attention was paid to backstage politics than to what was actually going on in the ring. Egos and laziness got in the way of good business. For the sake of the sport, McMahon better not allow that to happen to the WWF. □

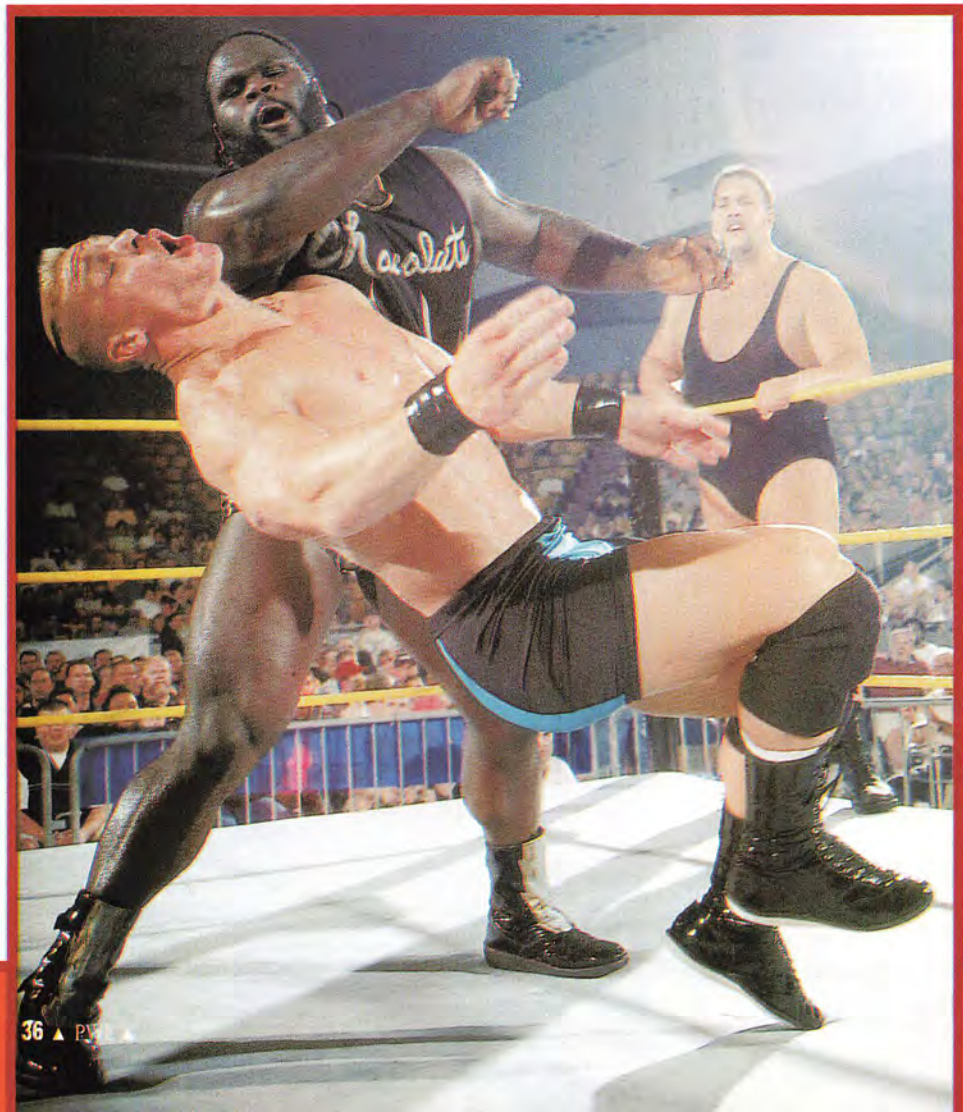
There are plenty of independents out there, but obviously some promotions (and some regions) are much stronger than others. And now that there's only one big league in the U.S., the competition in the indies is stronger than ever

THE STATE OF INDEPENDENT WRESTLING

LIKE THE THREE major companies (which turned into one major company within a few months), the independent scene has gone through a period of radical change in the last year. Not surprisingly, much of that was brought on by the unification of WWF, WCW, and ECW.

A large cast of characters across the United States was already busily fighting for fewer and fewer spots among the strong and not-so-strong independent companies when even more wrestlers—those ECW and WCW wrestlers not picked up by the WWF—came into the picture. The strange mix of ingredients has given some companies an unexpected boost, while others have crumbled under the additional weight.

For example, Ohio Valley Wrestling and the Heartland Wrestling Association, the WWF's two main developmental territories (the HWA has taken the place of Memphis Championship Wrestling), stay strong thanks to WWFE. They are home to some of the independent world's hottest prospects. WWF stars in need of further polish, those awaiting creative



Mark Henry has called Ohio Valley Wrestling home for more than a year now. As a developmental territory for the WWF, it has an unusual mix of talent. Some hot WWF prospects. Some former WWF regulars who need to improve or come back from injury. And some wrestlers who fit into neither category.

California boasts some very strong indy promotions, namely UPW and APW. Stars such as Samoa Joe and Chris Daniels have gotten noticed by talent scouts from Japan and thus gained valuable experience in that country.

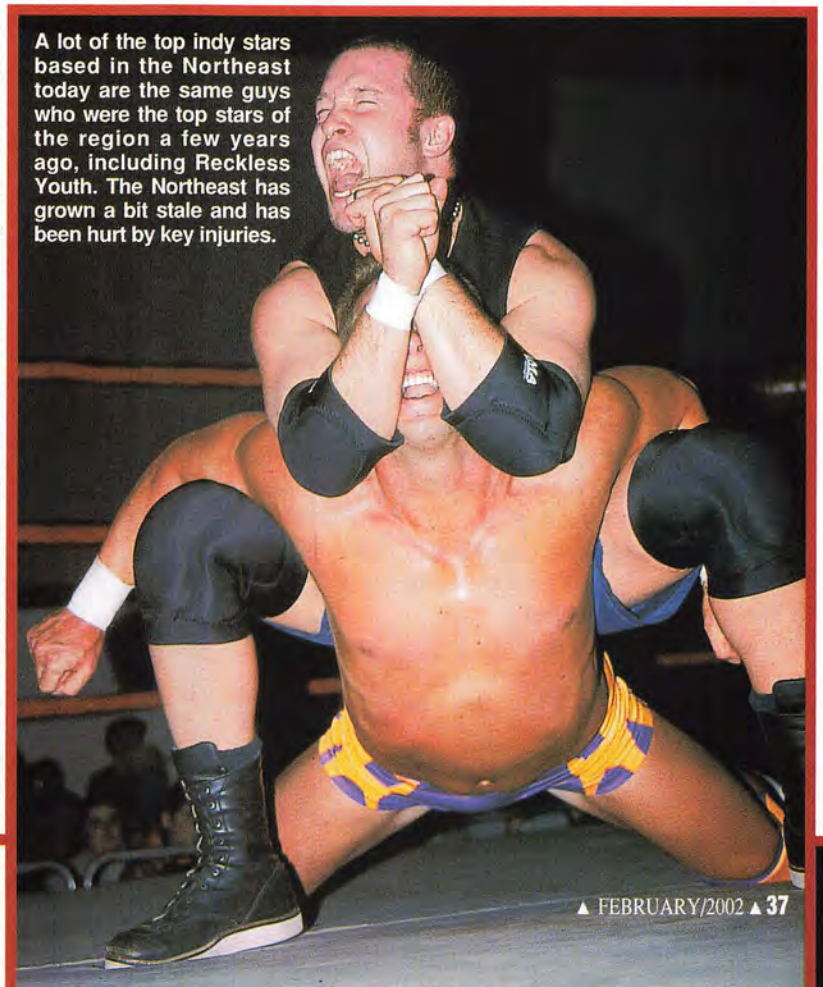
direction for television, and a few who need to shed ring rust after sitting out with injuries end up in the HWA or OVW as well.

There, men like Mark Henry and Kaz Hayashi ply their trade alongside developing stars like Brock Lesnar and Russ and Charlie Haas, who haven't made it to WWF TV at all yet. Occasional appearances by big-name WWF superstars like Kurt Angle and Chris Jericho help to keep the fan base relatively strong and interest high.

On the West Coast, Ultimate Pro Wrestling keeps itself in the game by collecting and training other key free agents, many of which are being considered by the WWF, New Japan Pro Wrestling, and other national companies. Just recently, UPW stars Tom Howard, Horseshu, and Samoa Joe traveled to Zero-One, a Japanese independent company controlled by NJPW and are gaining tremendous international experience in the process.

The northeast quadrant of the United States, which had long been the country's biggest independent hotbed, has suffered from a proliferation of mediocre companies, and a dearth of promising new talent. While top groups like Maryland Championship Wrestling and the East Coast Wrestling Association continue to do well, lesser promotions in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and New England struggle to maintain their audiences. Some of the region's biggest attractions have been hampered by serious injuries in the last 12 months, as men like Reckless Youth, Ace Darling, Mike Quackenbush, and Julio Dinero have spent time on the sidelines.

Quickly developing into a new hot spot is the Midwest,



A lot of the top indy stars based in the Northeast today are the same guys who were the top stars of the region a few years ago, including Reckless Youth. The Northeast has grown a bit stale and has been hurt by key injuries.

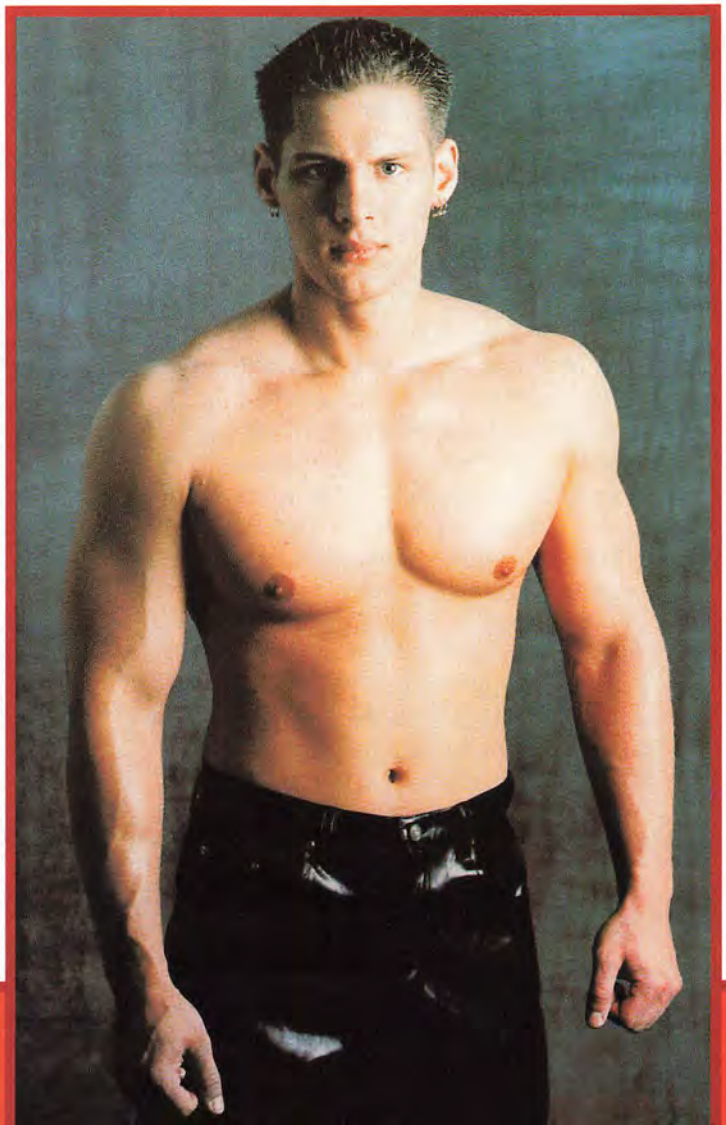
The New Heavenly Bodies have been a big part of the resurgence of independent wrestling in Florida. Many of the top promotions in that state have been at war with each other inside the ring.

where groups like IWA Mid-South have earned a loyal following thanks to a new crop of young athletes with solid star potential. From Wisconsin to Indiana, men like C.M. Punk, Colt Cabana, and Chris Hero have been helping to rebuild a region of the country that just five years ago was starving for quality independent action. Certain veterans of the territory—men like Ace Steel and Danny Dominion, for instance—have helped the developing stars hone their craft.

Although once a territory unto itself, wrestling in the state of Texas has been suffering. Particularly since the close of Shawn Michaels' TWA, Texas has seen an exodus of independent talent, and only a handful of groups still run regularly. As Texas has taken a step back, the independent scene in Florida seems to have taken a *leap* forward, as NWA Florida, IPW Hardcore, Florida Championship Wrestling, and a number of other developing companies run from one corner of the state to the other. Scoot Andrews, who wrestles across the country, is king in Florida.

Another wrestler in hot demand by indy groups is Chris Daniels, number one in California's APW. Daniels also pops up in Japan for Michinoku Pro. Joining Daniels abroad are Michael Modest, Donovan Morgan, and a few other APW stars. These men make their overseas home in NOAH, the group controlled by Mitsuharu Misawa.

The upper echelon of independent talent looks a lot like it did last year, but the scene has changed since the shakeups in the big leagues. Now the familiar faces on the independent roster are flanked by ex-WCW and ex-ECW stars, and even a former WWF announcer. Since his release from the WWF, Jerry Lawler has been appearing on indy shows all across the



Eric Priest is one of a number of promising young stars who are doing their part to reinvigorate the independent scene in the Midwest.

Nate Hatred is one of the most colorful characters to appear in Combat Zone Wrestling. It's one of those hardcore promotions that has a loyal fan base, but it's also the kind of promotion that a lot of traditionalists (and even some non-traditionalists) can't stand to watch.

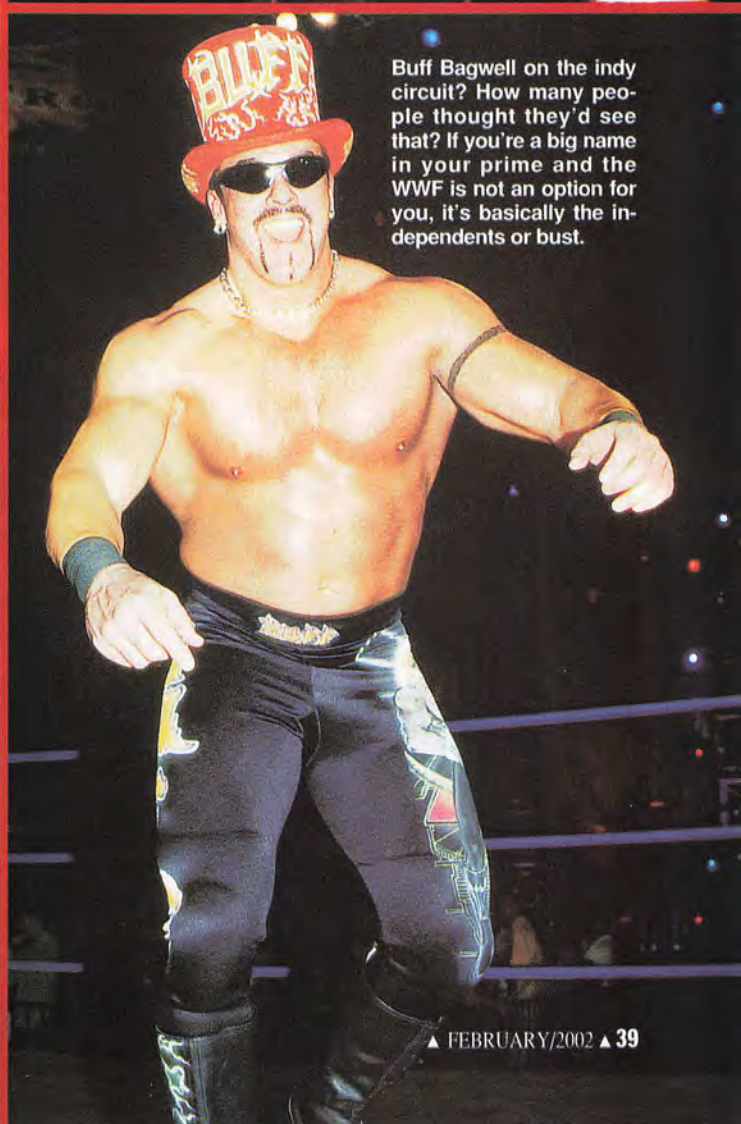
nation, where he provides a main-event attraction for many promotions. Unfortunately, Lawler, without WWF exposure, doesn't always do much to boost attendance at shows.

For a short time, it seemed that Main Event Championship Wrestling, a group based out of Evansville, Indiana, was poised to make a big impact on the independent circuit. Gathering up many of the fallen stars from the Big Three, ranging from Curt Hennig and The Sandman to Buff Bagwell and Steve Corino, MECW held together an impressive lineup of former star players. As many predicted, the financial base of the group soon fell into disarray, leaving MECW's future shaky at best.

While MECW had hoped to appeal to more traditional wrestling fans, it seems that one of the most consistent independent audiences out there is a hardcore one. The country's most outrageous and dangerous promotions are still going, and Combat Zone Wrestling (in the Northeast) and Xtreme Pro Wrestling (in California) have carved out niches for their products. Although some might question how much actual wrestling really goes on at these events, one thing is beyond question—the loyalty of the rabid fans that support these promotions and their stars.

Something that can be questioned is the motivation of young wrestlers in these hardcore promotions. They subject their bodies to an inordinate (some say inhuman) amount of punishment for very little money and glory and very little hope for catching on with the WWF.

Across the country, certain territories grow stronger as others grow weaker, and the cycle will continue like this for the foreseeable future. Stars will be nurtured and developed, and the independents will remain the training ground for tomorrow's big league superstars. □



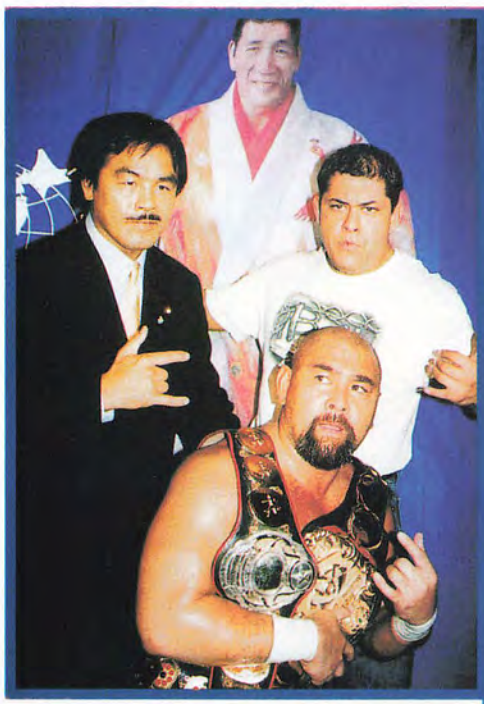
Buff Bagwell on the indy circuit? How many people thought they'd see that? If you're a big name in your prime and the WWF is not an option for you, it's basically the independents or bust.

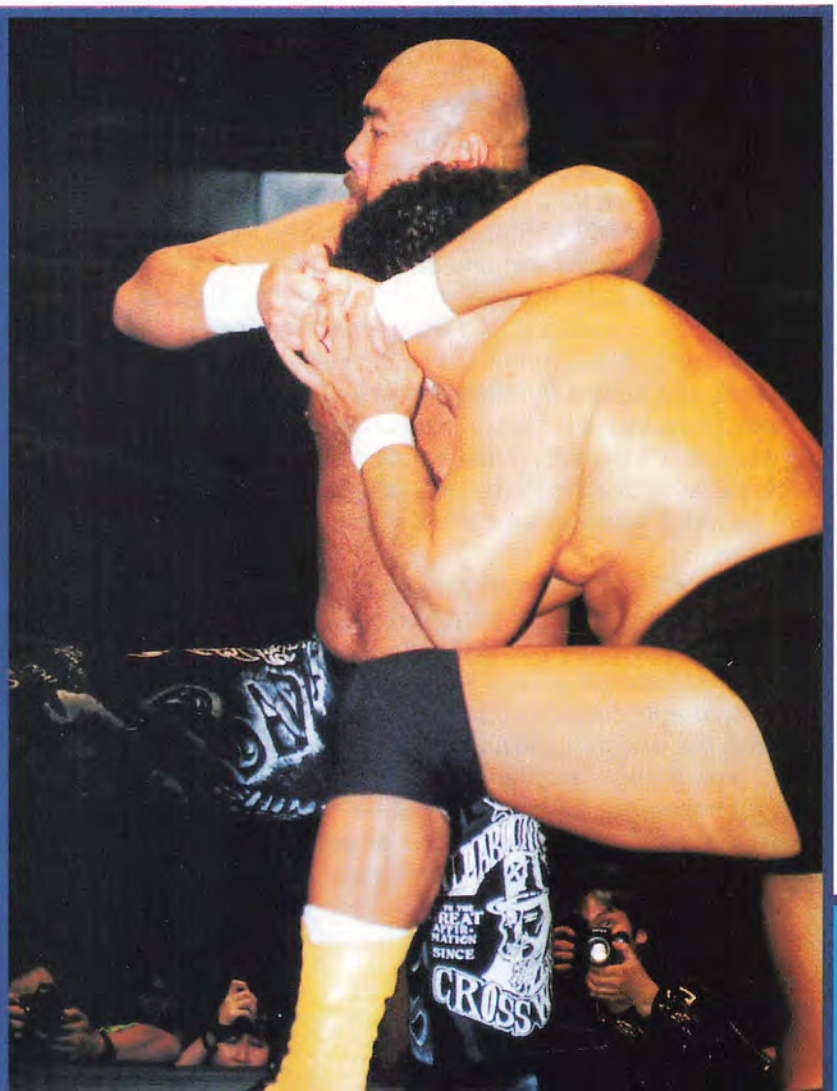
Wrestling in Japan and Mexico is quite a bit different than the wrestling we see in the United States, but the problems facing promoters and wrestlers in those countries are pretty much the same

THE STATE OF INTERNATIONAL WRESTLING

WHEN YOU THINK about international wrestling, chances are the first country that comes to your mind is Japan. The home of more traditional wrestling. Less gimmickry. More sport than entertainment.

Right now, however, when you examine the state of wrestling across the Pacific, things aren't all that different than they are here. New Japan Pro Wrestling has emerged as the only truly strong national promotion in the country, while the closest runners-up, Pro





New Japan's Keiji Muto is *the* star in the Far East. He made history when he beat Genichiro Tenryu for the *All-Japan* Triple Crown (right). Muto (posing with Hiroshi Hase and Taiyo Kea, above) can look forward to wrestling in future New Japan vs. All-Japan dream matches. New Japan will benefit most from that.

Jun Akiyama, the Pro Wrestling NOAH GHC champion at press time, has done a lot to fill the void left by injured NOAH standout Kenta Kobashi. But like All-Japan, NOAH has felt the need to work with New Japan in order to remain viable.

Wrestling NOAH and All-Japan Pro Wrestling, seem to have decidedly less influence on the *puroresu* scene than they had in the past. Like the WWF does here, New Japan holds all the political marbles, and it uses its business ties to both All-Japan and NOAH as leashes to keep the two rival promotions in check.

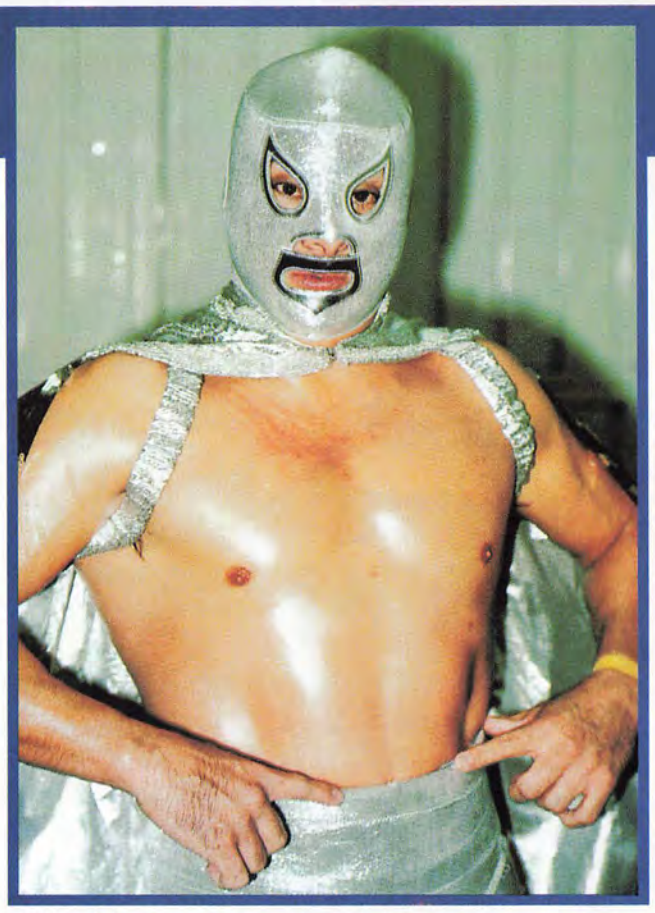
All-Japan has been limping since the exodus of talent that led to the creation of NOAH last year, and even with big names like Genichiro Tenryu and Toshiaki Kawada still in the mix, its lack of roster depth has hurt that company significantly. Interest in All-Japan picked up when Keiji Muto (of New Japan) captured All-Japan's top championship, the Triple Crown, but it left New Japan in a position of power, and All-Japan has no choice but to follow New Japan's lead.

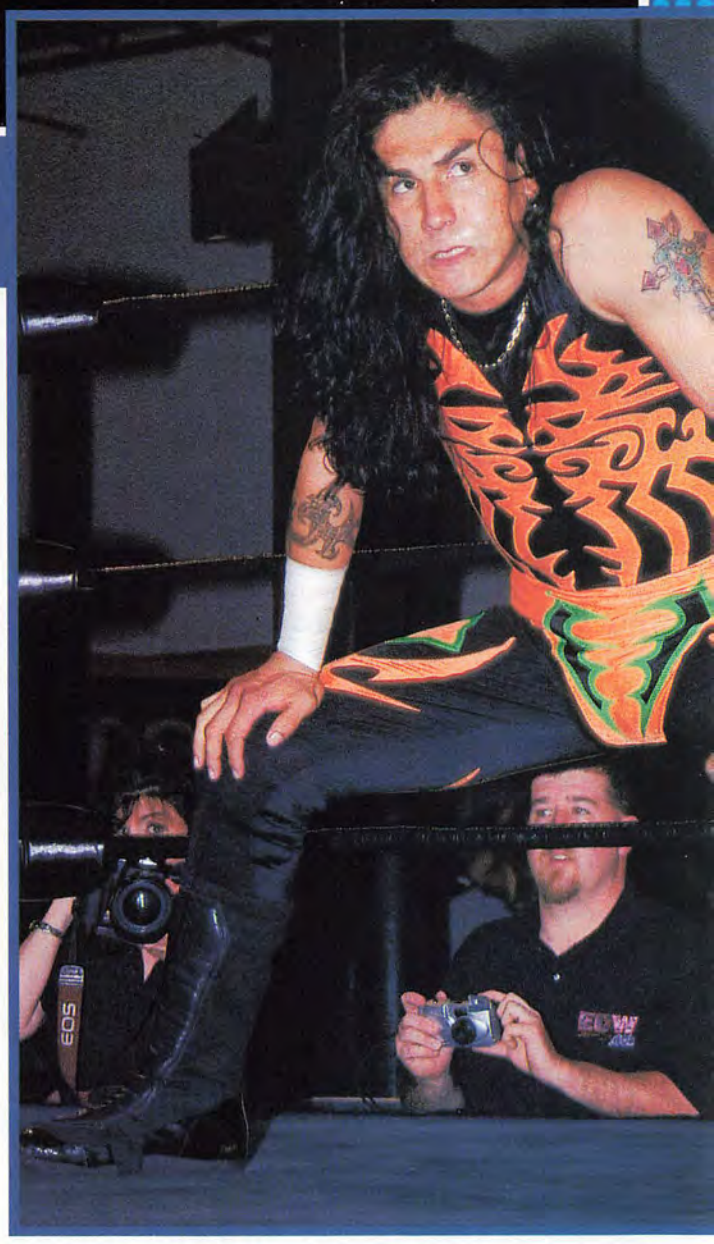
Mitsuharu Misawa's NOAH group is looking a little stronger than All-Japan currently, which comes as a bit of a surprise, since top star Kenta Kobashi has taken a lengthy leave of absence due to nagging knee problems. Jun Akiyama has developed as the company's main attraction in Kobashi's absence, but NOAH is hardly a serious threat to New Japan at this point. Both NOAH and All-Japan have been working with New Japan, which really doesn't suit either group.

Realistically, though, cooperation with New Japan is necessary for survival, and both are in no position to make demands of New Japan. They are pawns in a game New Japan has mastered and has played before with groups like UWFI and, to a lesser degree, WAR. New Japan thus has the ability to promote numerous interpromotional dream matches while making sure the hottest, most-anticipated pairings take place on New Japan shows.

Eventually, though, like Chris Kanyon compared to The Rock in the U.S., All-Japan and NOAH will seem like B-level players compared to New Japan in the eyes of *puroresu* fans, and that stigma will affect their bottom lines for years to come.

A little closer to home, in Mexico, things are very different. Perennial rivals AAA and EMLL are still at





While EMLL and AAA continue to battle for supremacy in Mexico, *both* use the services of El Hijo del Santo. A few of the elite Lucha Libre stars are permitted to wrestle wherever and for whomever they choose. Could you imagine The Rock jumping back and forth between the WWF and WCW before WCW was purchased?

war, fighting for the top spot in the world of Lucha Libre. The two groups attract very different audiences, as modern AAA has clearly been influenced by the ECW extreme style of wrestling. While AAA isn't nearly as hardcore as ECW was at its height, the influence is still there. Fans who are more appreciative of traditional wrestling tend to follow EMLL, which some liken to the old NWA shows, with sound technical wrestling and clearly defined roles for *technicos* and *rudos*.

Both groups have to deal with an unusual privilege shared by only Lucha's biggest stars. Historically, the true superstars of Lucha, like Mil Mascaras, El Hijo del Santo, and Perro Aguayo, have commanded enough attention and respect that they are permitted to wrestle for whatever company they like—AAA, EMLL, and even some of the scattered Mexican independent groups. This means that the most popular names in the sport are not bound to any single company, and the promotions cannot lay claim to any of the really big names for anything more than a few events at a time.

Each company maintains a cast of regulars, as EMLL's Negro Casas and Dr. Wagner Jr. remain solid box office draws, while AAA has had long-running

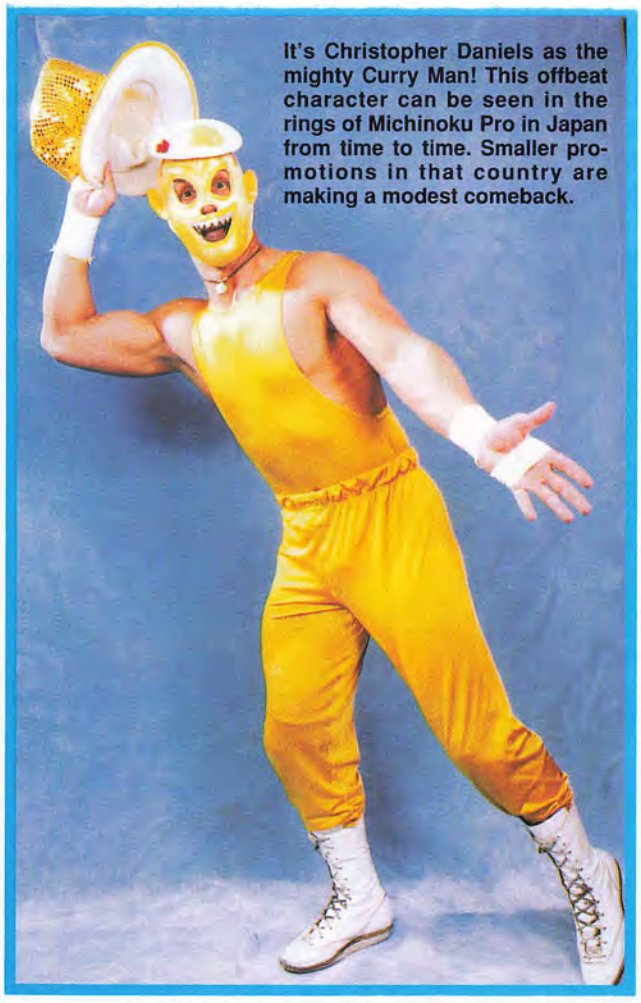
The downfall of WCW has given Mexican wrestling a boost. Psicosis and others who competed at least part-time in the U.S. before are back to wrestling full-time in their native countries.

success with the likes of Octagon and Mascara Sagrada. The return of former WCW mid-carders such as Juventud Guerrera, Hector Garza, and Psicosis (known as Nicho El Millionario in his native country) has helped to boost interest in Lucha, but, by and large, wrestling in Mexico has been in a decline for a few years now. Lucha Libre coverage has been pulled from some newspapers, television time for Lucha shows is still being reduced, and attendance at arenas has been slumping for some time.

A proliferation of independents throughout the country, many of which burn out and disappear very quickly, have hurt AAA and EMLL's business, but there is enough of an audience that some shows promoted by smaller groups can still be successful.

Even in Japan, independent companies like Michinoku Pro, Toryumon, and Osaka Pro, all of which are Lucha-influenced, have experienced something of a resurgence. Interest in these smaller promotions bottomed out about two years ago, but 2001 saw fans return in force to see these small federations, and the upswing is still in motion today.

The Asian recession that hurt attendance numbers and jeopardized the future of some of these independents (including women's promotions like All-Japan Women and ARSION) hasn't ended, but fans seem to be coming back to support these groups anyway. Even though the biggest companies can't match the business they were doing a decade ago, there is enough room in the sandbox for many companies, of many shapes and sizes, to co-exist. □

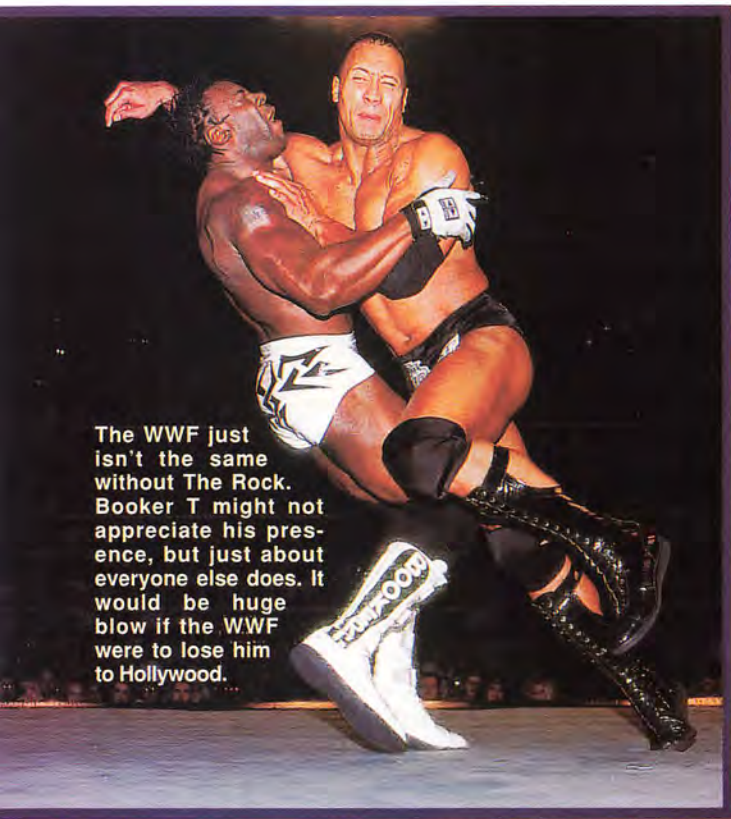


It's Christopher Daniels as the mighty Curry Man! This offbeat character can be seen in the rings of Michinoku Pro in Japan from time to time. Smaller promotions in that country are making a modest comeback.

Three major American promotions were condensed into one in the last 12 months, and that means there are fewer top spots than ever before—and more skilled wrestlers than ever fighting for them. The next year will be crucial for all of them

THE STATE OF THE STARS

"THE STARS ALIGNED" is a lazy man's phrase. It's an easy out for someone who can't intelligently articulate why a certain favorable event came to pass. In reality, celestial alignments (or lack thereof) of any kind probably have nothing to do with our good fortune. For all we know, if the universe's stars did align one day, they might set off a series of cataclysmic events. After all, it's not like the recent alignment of stars within the wrestling industry led to a strong resurgence in business. As of press time, ratings for *Raw* and *Smackdown* were just about where they were when the WCW invasion of the WWF began way back in July.



The WWF just isn't the same without The Rock. Booker T might not appreciate his presence, but just about everyone else does. It would be huge blow if the WWF were to lose him to Hollywood.

But wrestling's stars did align—and for many wrestling fans, it was a dream come true. Finally, wrestlers from the WWF, WCW, and ECW, long kept apart because of industry politics, stood face-to-face in the middle of a ring. Dream matches that were once thought to be impossible to put together suddenly became common occurrences on *house shows* no less. And for all the top stars, the Alliance invasion of the WWF provided them with their first opportunity to prove themselves against main-eventers with whom they had no previous history.

Some of the stars have benefited from wrestling's new world order; some have not. Who has and who hasn't? You're about to find out.

THE ROCK

We have to admit that we've been selfish when it comes to The Rock. The four months during which he was absent from the WWF were four of the federation's longest months in recent memory. But don't worry. Even though The Rock already has two movies on his resume *(The Mummy Returns* and the yet-to-be-released *Scorpion King)* and is rumored to be up for roles in at least two other feature films, he's not planning to leave wrestling anytime soon.

Why do we say this? Well, Rock could have taken his sweet ol' time getting back into ring shape for his return to the federation. He didn't have to hurry back. He could have avoided defending the WWF from the threat of the Alliance had he wanted to. Sure, he would have been criticized, but could we blame him for refusing to risk his burgeoning movie career by wrestling in such an emotionally charged environment?

Instead, though, Rock returned to the federation and immediately sought out matches with the Alliance's top

Both Kurt Angle and Steve Austin are very hot right now, so it makes sense that their feud has been electrifying. Angle seems like he'll be even more important to the WWF than "Stone-Cold" in the long run.

wrestlers. Also, his reign as WCW World champion has been inspirational. In only a few months, he helped to re-establish the title's significance, which was all but lost following years of woeful mismanagement. He is the sport's top dog. Well, he and another guy we're getting to next.

STEVE AUSTIN

For years, "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin was the heel who just couldn't get booed. Of course, during the height of his popularity, Austin wasn't trying to draw the ire of the fans. He may have acted brazen and cocky, flipped birds in the audience's direction, and cussed more often than a parrot with a naughty owner, but he was well-respected; his actions always seemed to support the course of greatest righteousness, no matter how they looked on the outside.

Sadly, that's no longer the case. "Stone-Cold" might act pretty much the same now as he did then, but his motives have changed drastically. No longer is he a force of good kicking evil upside the head. Instead, throughout the summer he looked to hold on to that WWF World title by any means necessary. In fact, there wasn't much he wouldn't do to keep the gold around his waist. Just ask poor Lita, who felt Austin's wrath more than once.

Perhaps this is what Austin wanted all along. He never asked the fans to like him and buy his merchandise; they just did. By his actions inside and outside of the ring, Austin in essence told the fans to boo him, but they refused. Now they're paying the price for cheering on an anti-hero who was never a hero to begin with.

KURT ANGLE

Kurt Angle could have joined the Alliance. Word out of the WWF has it that the offer was there and that Shane McMahon and Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley wanted his services badly, maybe even more than the services of The Rock or Steve Austin. In Angle, Shane and Steph are said to believe, is the makings of a superstar for many years to come.

Well, no kidding. Angle might not be the most important wrestler on either roster right now, but when talking about the sport's future, he is undoubtedly at the top of the list. No matter how good Austin looks in the ring (which is pretty damn good), he's been at this for a long time and is feeling the effects. Rock is still relatively young, but the movie world could feasibly snap him up at any time. Plus, do either Rock or Austin bring the legitimacy of an Olympic gold medal to the table like Angle does?

Nope.

Just before we went to press, Angle embarked on his second WWF World title reign. The first time Angle wore the belt, he was a coward of a wrestler who used diversions and deceit to keep his title. Now he's looking like a standup and controversy-free champion, which is what the WWF desperately needs.

For all the right reasons, Angle is where most of wrestling's hopes lie.

Gore! Gore! Gore! Rhyno's signature finisher has become one of the most anticipated moves in the WWF. It's hard to figure just where he stands right now, though. He's getting a good push, but is he destined to be a top-tier player?

RHYNO

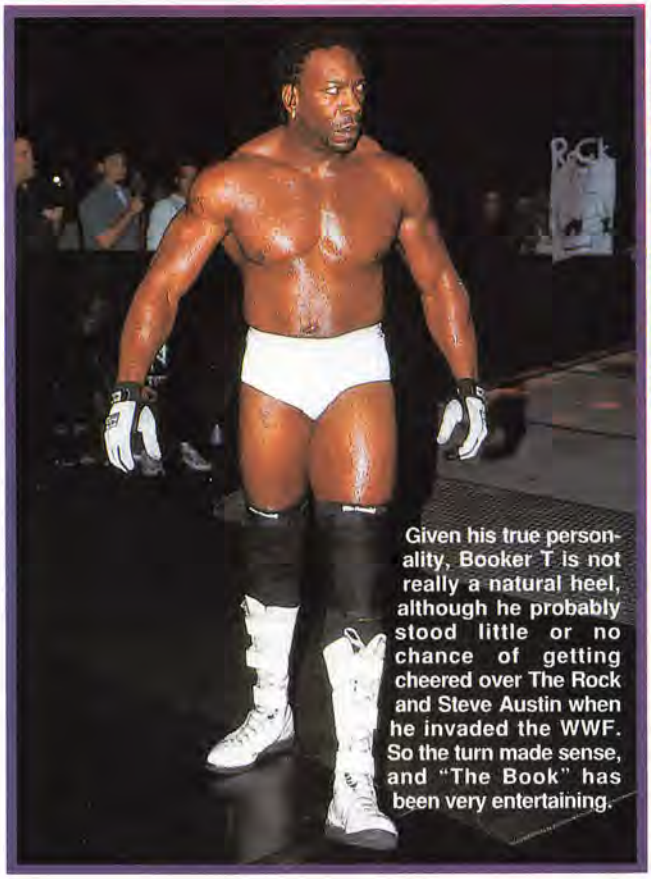
Rhyno became the ECW World heavyweight champion shortly before that promotion shut its doors. Because of that, he didn't have much time to prove himself on a

national stage before signing with the WWF. It can even be argued that he walked into the WWF a relative unknown. Being the world champion of a defunct promotion rarely gets you press.

But Rhyno persevered. He was one of the first WWFers contacted about jumping to the Alliance side. Not surprisingly, he readily agreed. Make no mistake, even though he held the WCW U.S. title at the end of September, he is undoubtedly still the unofficial ECW champion.

Unfortunately for Rhyno, even with gold around his waist, he seems to have lost his place within the Alliance. Paul Heyman still screams, "Gore! Gore! Gore!" at every given opportunity, but he has curtailed his Rhyno propaganda in favor of hyping Steve Austin and Rob Van Dam. Even Rhyno's August pin of The Rock during a tag team match—which was seen in some circles as this year's most outstanding "Who woulda thunk it?"—went largely ignored by the Alliance. That pin should have propelled Rhyno into wrestling's top tier. Instead, the Alliance kept pursuing world title shots for Booker T and chose to view Rhyno's success against The Rock as simply an act of softening him up.

It'll be interesting to see how long Rhyno allows himself to be used as a meat tenderizer. Our guess is not long.



Given his true personality, Booker T is not really a natural heel, although he probably stood little or no chance of getting cheered over The Rock and Steve Austin when he invaded the WWF. So the turn made sense, and "The Book" has been very entertaining.

BOOKER T

Something strange happened to Booker T while he tried to legitimize WCW and its World heavyweight title in the WWF: He became a less polished version of The Rock.

Why Booker T felt the need to do this, we don't know. It's not like it hasn't been done before. (Remember Juventud Guerrera as The Juice?) Also, in the Time Warner-owned WCW, Booker was a breakout star. He doesn't need to rip off someone else's gimmick or moves to get himself over; his personality and overall athletic ability allow him to do that with relative ease.

At the very least, it's time to stop calling the spinnerooni "the most electrifying move in sports entertainment" (especially considering it's not really a wrestling move).

Of course, WWF fans might never have given him a chance if he hadn't turned heel. Although Booker and WCW initially garnered positive reactions, once the WCW product started debuting on WWF TV, WWF fans turned and turned quickly. The only way Booker remained viable was by completely ignoring his true self and becoming a heel. Do you really think he wants to take a backseat to "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin? No way. More than likely, Booker believes he's better than "Stone-Cold" but is taking a more secondary role to preserve the Alliance.

If the Alliance does break away from the WWF and get its own TV show, Booker T will be a vital part of its programming. Who else can you say that about with absolute certainty?

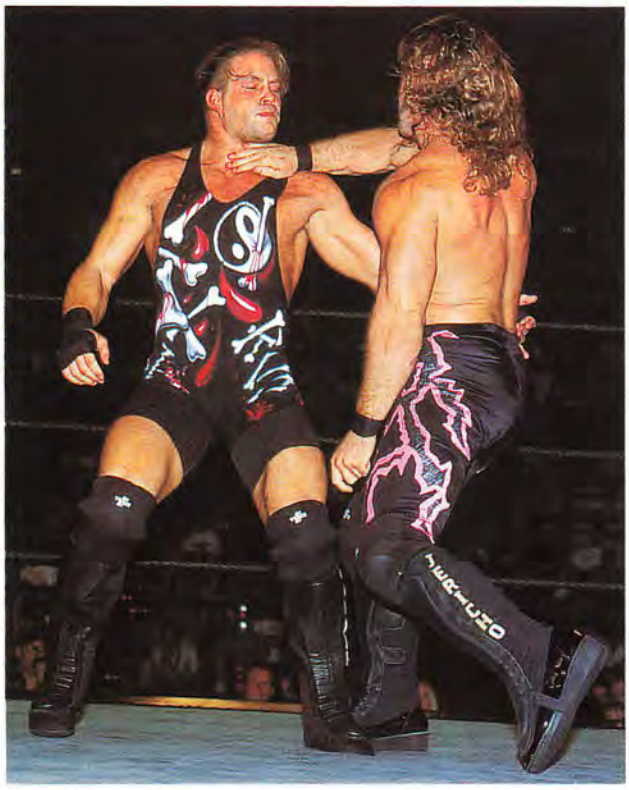
ROB VAN DAM

Since debuting in the WWF on the side of the Alliance, Rob Van Dam has changed from a *could be* to an *absolutely is.* There's no more doubting that Van Dam is everything he's always claimed to be—and maybe even more.

The strange thing about Van Dam's transition to becoming one of the sport's top stars, though, is that he hasn't changed since his ECW days. He's still pointing his thumbs in his own face nonstop and he's still as arrogant as ever. And, truth be told, he still hasn't accomplished all that much *yet.* Sure, RVD might have given the WWF hardcore title some much-needed credibility and treated us to some fantastic matches, but what else has he done? Okay, there was that semi-tainted victory over "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin (thanks in part to Kurt Angle).

But "Mr. Monday Night" wasn't running around demanding matches against any top WWF stars for their titles. He got the bout with Austin through sheer luck and was booked against The Rock in late-September only because Stephanie McMahon suggested it.

WWF fans, however, don't seem to care. He's more popular than all the other Alliance members combined, and that includes Austin, his sometimes best friend,



It appears Rob Van Dam has become the new hottest thing in the WWF. Chris Jericho was in a similar position two years ago, and his popularity has endured. However, RVD might get what Y2J never got: an extended stay in the WWF's upper echelon.

sometimes enemy. Stephanie has even taken a special liking to RVD. Was it us, or did Steph suddenly develop a twinkling in her eyes when RVD offered to do *anything* for her?

With a supporter like Stephanie, a world title run, either as the WWF or WCW champion, could—maybe *should*—happen by spring thaw.

CHRIS JERICHO

Chris Jericho made a mistake when he didn't follow "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin to the Alliance. Heck, he should have sought out Shane McMahon immediately following his purchase of WCW and offered his services right then and there. A jump to WCW probably would have launched him into wrestling's top tier for years to come.

It still could.

Despite his popularity, Jericho's WWF career has been unbearably frustrating. By now, he should be one of the federation's elite. Instead, he's had to watch Kurt Angle ascend to a position that many thought was his to take years ago. And with the signings of Kevin Nash, Scott Hall, and Scott Steiner looming, Jericho needs to establish his main-event qualities now, while he still has the opportunity. If he doesn't, he probably has a future tagging with Chris Benoit (another misused talent of extraordinary ability) to look toward.

So what's the problem? His matches haven't been lethargic at all, and his promos are as funny as they were when he debuted in the WWF. He's still the guy that the federation hired and hyped to oblivion.

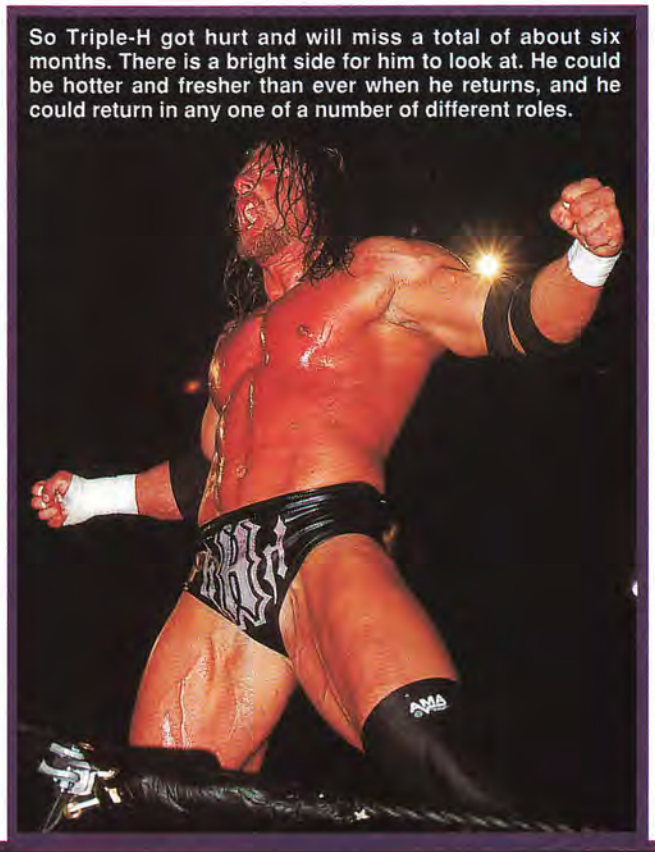
Of course, that might be the one thing that's holding Jericho back: He's exactly the guy the WWF hired and nothing more. Whether the blame for that lies with Jericho or the WWF is hard to tell, but Y2J could use a change. The Alliance would be a good fit for him.

TRIPLE-H

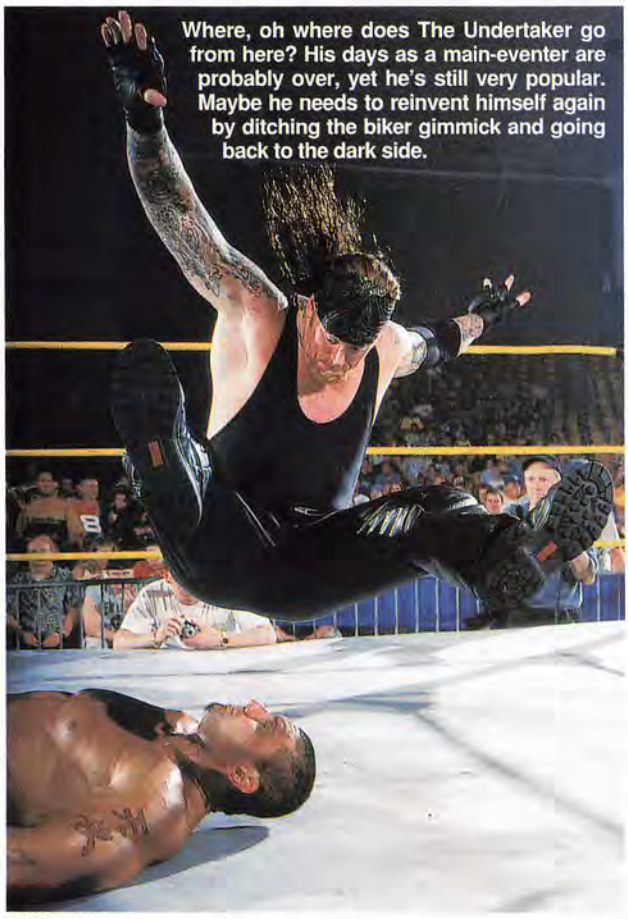
Even though Triple-H still hadn't made his way back to WWF TV as we were putting this special issue together, there was no way that he could have been left out of this section. He's just too big a star—even injured—to ignore.

Helmsley's decision to rejoin the WWF or side with the Alliance and his wife, Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley, will have a tremendous impact on the sport. If he joins the Alliance (as most think he'll do because of the Stephanie tie-in), that group will immediately gain an advantage over the WWF. (How strong does the triumvirate of Helmsley, "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin, and Booker T sound?) If, however, he shuns Stephanie and the Alliance, the WWF will be in a position to eliminate the Alliance once and for all.

When Hunter returns, though, he'll be walking into a situation the likes of which he's never seen. In fact, he might be so disillusioned upon his return that he'll refuse to join either group at the outset. With buddies Kevin



So Triple-H got hurt and will miss a total of about six months. There is a bright side for him to look at. He could be hotter and fresher than ever when he returns, and he could return in any one of a number of different roles.



Where, oh where does The Undertaker go from here? His days as a main-eventer are probably over, yet he's still very popular. Maybe he needs to reinvent himself again by ditching the biker gimmick and going back to the dark side.

Nash and Scott Hall available for hire beginning shortly after the New Year's Day 2002, Hunter might be wise to wait and saddle up with them.

What a New World Order they'd make, huh?

THE UNDERTAKER

Vince McMahon is in an awful position. The Undertaker, one of his favorite and most loyal employees for the past decade-plus, is starting to become tiresome. It's not really The Undertaker's fault. A "Decade Of Destruction" doesn't come without a price. In this case, the price was the wearing down of 'Taker's body and gimmick, both of which have seen better days. Now McMahon, who is known for his loyalty to his long-time stars (well, most of them), is having to listen to whisperings that 'Taker is becoming a detriment to the federation.

If McMahon's smart, he'll shelve those whisperings. 'Taker might not be what he once was, but he's still more valuable than most. Another strong run as WWF champion is likely out of his reach, but a long feud against the WWF champion (or the WCW champion, for that matter) certainly is not. 'Taker just has to give a bit, that's all. He needs to dump his current biker gimmick and go old school.

He needs to revisit the dark side.

Of course, that's easier said than done. The political climate of the United States has changed since 'Taker spoke in tongues and tried to sacrifice enemies back in 1999. But 'Taker wasn't always so evil as that last sorcerer gimmick portrayed him to be. There's a middle ground to be found. And who better to unearth it than, well, an Undertaker?

KANE

Since we're talking about men in need of gimmick changes, let's continue. There is no wrestler on the WWF roster who is more in need of a makeover than Kane.

When Kane first appeared in the WWF way back in 1997, the character at least made sense. Back then, Undertaker's past was largely a mystery, so the fact that he had a brother who was charred by the same fire that killed their parents seemed, well, at least viable in the WWF world.

Things have changed. Kane's ring outfit defies his very past. Either he's had some very good reconstructive surgery over the years or maybe, just maybe, he wasn't burned at all. That being the case, why is his face still covered? Why not do away with the mask altogether? It's unfortunate, but he's become more comical than anything else.

The WWF's advertisers seem to agree. Instead of painting Kane as an uncontrollable monster, he's lately been featured as a goof. Case in point, the Chef Boyardee commercial in which he explodes two cans of beef ravioli or something of the sort. There was also the nonsensical spot on *Raw* in which he assaulted an arcade game because he wanted to win a child a stuffed doll.

Is this truly what's become of "The Big Red Machine"?

Scenes like this look, quite frankly, a bit ridiculous. If Kane is out and about signing autographs and chatting it up with fans, it's time for him to go for an image makeover and get rid of the hideous masked monster persona.

WWF fans love their Lita! They love her attitude, her courage, her outfits, and her wrestling. We can only hope she doesn't overestimate her worth to the company. That's a mistake other WWF divas have made.

LITA

Is Lita the latest in the long line of here today, gone tomorrow WWF divas, or is she going to stick it out over the long haul? Really, it all depends on her. If she remains content to wrestle the occasional women's match while also getting involved in the matches of The Hardy Boyz (or whoever else she winds up with during the course of her career), she could have a long, prosperous stay with the federation. If, however, Lita develops a big head and decides that she wants to expand her career to include regular matches against the men or Hollywood possibilities, the WWF might terminate her faster than you can say *"Mamacita."*

Lita's no fool. She's seen what's happened to the women of the WWF who preceded her. She knows that Vince McMahon could fire her tomorrow and she'd be without a job in the wrestling business. She's not going to rock the boat.

Also, Lita must recognize that she's different from both Sable and Chyna. They were valuable to the WWF for reasons that Lita simply cannot supply. Sable was a larger-than-life calendar girl. Chyna was just plain larger than life. Despite their individual attributes, both women, after confronting WWF management about various issues, found themselves out of the wrestling business (Chyna didn't leave on horrible terms and said she'd be willing to discuss a one-time-only appearance at a huge event such as WrestleMania XVIII).

For the moment, a supporting role, even if it's a highly visible supporting role, is Lita's proper place. Let's hope she's content with that.

THE HARDY BOYZ

Two years ago, tag team wrestling was all the rage in the WWF, and The Hardy Boyz had a lot to do with it. Their high-flying antics, along with the daredevil escapades of Edge and Christian and the sheer brutality of The Dudley Boyz, brought about a tag team renaissance that many wrestling insiders thought would never happen again.

Slowly, however, tag team wrestling cooled off again. As no new teams emerged to freshen things up, the matches between the Hardys, Dudley, and E & C lost some of their sizzle and became stale. It became apparent to those watching the scene that all three of those teams would have to evolve.

Edge and Jeff Hardy (as well as brother Matt) are both trying to make that difficult transition from tag team specialist to singles star. They're doing it in different ways. Edge hardly wrestles in tag teams at all, while both Hardys try to do tag team *and* singles matches.

Matt and Jeff were really the only ones to do so.

While the Dudleys continued to team and while Christian tried to force Edge to keep teaming, Matt and Jeff agreed to experiment in the singles ranks. Pretty soon, Matt was the European champion and Jeff was the Intercontinental champion (albeit short-lived). While holding those belts, Matt and Jeff continued to team, too. Their brotherly love survived despite their singles success, which is a great testament to how much they really want to see the other succeed. Even divided, they remain united, which is why they're not done collecting championship gold just yet.

Maybe they should try their hands at hosting couples counseling.

EDGE

Edge's job in the coming months is going to be a difficult one: He's going to have to put his relationship with Christian out of his mind. As long as Christian is part of his mix, whether as a friend or foe, Edge is most likely going to suffer.

At least for Edge's sake, Christian seems content on pushing the issue. Edge doesn't have to worry about reigning himself in, because Christian won't allow it. In fact, Christian's persistent hounding of Edge should help Edge speed up the process of putting Christian behind him. Once Edge does that, his future is his own, and it looks to be an awfully bright one.

Edge has had the makings of a WWF main-eventer for years now. He's tall, athletic, and good-looking, and he has considerable skill when he has a microphone in his hand, too. His experience as a tag team wrestler shouldn't hurt him, either. Shawn Michaels took the same route and is regarded as one of the WWF's all-time greatest champions and showmen.

As for future opponents, there aren't as many whom Edge can't beat on any given night. The Austins, Angles, Triple-Hs, and Rocks might have an advantage on him for the moment, but once Edge gets a few months of singles wrestling under his belt, he'll be able to take them on successfully, too.

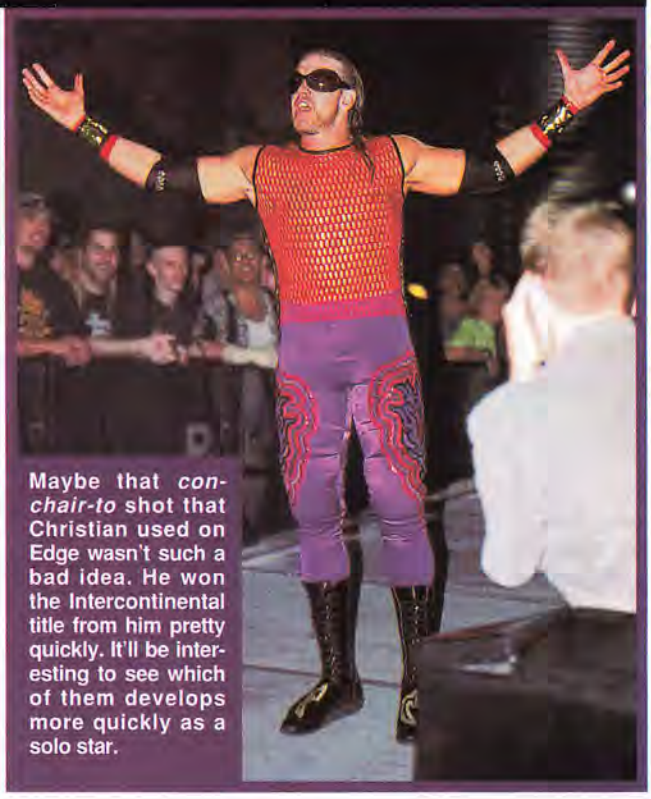
WWF champion Edge in, say, 2003? Works for us.

CHRISTIAN

Christian is in a no-win situation. By splitting from Edge and ridiculing him on *Raw* and *Smackdown,* he alienated the one person he's been able to depend upon his entire WWF career. The Alliance probably will come calling, but the only thing that a young wrestler can depend on that group for is a good beating every time he screws up.

Whether Christian realizes it or not, when he separated himself from Edge, he separated himself from his safety net.

Let us hope Christian will prove that he's more resilient than the rest of the WWF light heavyweights who find themselves on *Jakked, Metal,* and not much else. Watching the career of former ECW World champ Jerry Lynn wither away because WWF officials believe he doesn't have a marketable look makes us worry for Christian's future, though. At the time ECW folded, Lynn was regarded as the promotion's second-best pure wrestler, behind only Rob Van Dam.



Maybe that *con-chair-to* shot that Christian used on Edge wasn't such a bad idea. He won the Intercontinental title from him pretty quickly. It'll be interesting to see which of them develops more quickly as a solo star.

That sure bought him a lot of respect from the WWF, didn't it?

Yes, Christian is talented. Funny, too. Those sunglasses and that intro are silly enough to make even Steve Blackman laugh. Will his talent and humor be enough to keep him on *Raw* and *Smackdown* consistently?

We're all about to find out.

TAJIRI

Wrestling is fraught with strange relationships. As of press time, Tajiri was a player in two of the oddest we've ever seen. His friendship with WWF Commissioner William Regal is strange enough. His love affair with the voluptuous Torrie Wilson is damn near mind-boggling.

Putting those two relationships aside, we have to admit that Tajiri has been mighty impressive. After watching a long line of ho-hum WWF light heavyweight champions pass through, he captured that title and helped re-establish it. Then he shocked Kanyon to win WCW's U.S. title as Regal silently rooted him on from the back. In Tajiri, Regal has an assassin of sorts, and in Regal, Tajiri has an effective mouthpiece. The fact that it's a symbiotic relationship, however, doesn't detract from the fact that it's a weird one.

So much for the theory that smallish Japanese wrestlers who don't speak much English can't get over in the WWF. Tajiri has, due in part to his talent, his sense of humor, and his odd relationships with William Regal and Torrie Wilson.

Then there's the matter of Tajiri's relationship with Wilson. At first it seemed as if Torrie was there to try to coax Tajiri into joining the Alliance. That changed after a couple of weeks, as Wilson actually seemed to fall for the little guy. Tajiri might still join the Alliance, but Wilson could also make the jump to the WWF side just to please her little man.

Either way, Tajiri has established himself in a federation in which smaller wrestlers usually don't receive much heed. He almost certainly will never be a main-eventer, but when you have Wilson on your arm and you're a hit with the WWF crowd, who cares?

STEVE CORINO

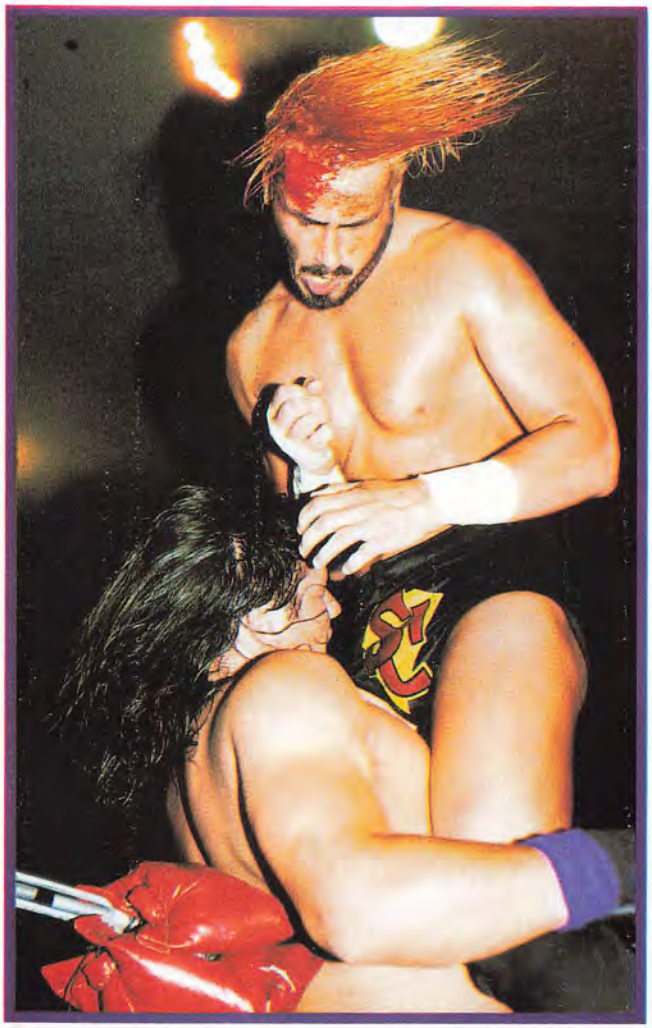
A year ago at this time, Steve Corino was the ECW World champion. Much to the surprise of many, Corino held on to that title for more than two months. Only when The Sandman beat him for the title at Guilty as Charged in January 2001 did his reign end.

Unfortunately, ECW folded shortly after that pay-per-view. And when the promotion re-formed (kind of) in the WWF under Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley, Corino wasn't brought in.

Of course, Corino wasn't exactly available. He was busy defending his NWA heavyweight title, which he had won in April, and preparing for tours of Japan and other countries. Even if Steph had called with an offer, it's questionable whether Corino would have signed. "The King Of Old School" doesn't take his position as NWA heavyweight champion lightly. He's proud to wear the same belt that men like Lou Thesz, Ric Flair, and Dusty Rhodes once wore, and we doubt that he would have given that title up to become just another underused Alliance member. He's that committed to the NWA.

Corino was scheduled to defend the NWA title at the NWA's 53rd anniversary show in mid-October against former IWGP champion Shinya Hashimoto. Oddsmakers had him as a decided underdog. Some were calling him foolish just for accepting the match. Corino, though, knows that a championship belt does not make a champion; a champion makes a championship belt.

WWF or no WWF, Steve Corino is a proud and deserving champion. □



Steve Corino doesn't lay awake at night thinking about what he needs to do to make it to the WWF. He fulfilled his lifelong dream when he beat Mike Rapada for the NWA heavyweight title and is content doing what he's doing.

Professional wrestling's overall popularity may be waning a bit, but surprisingly, the in-ring action is as diverse and entertaining as ever. Is the current blend of the scientific, high-risk, and hardcore styles the state of the art or just another trend?

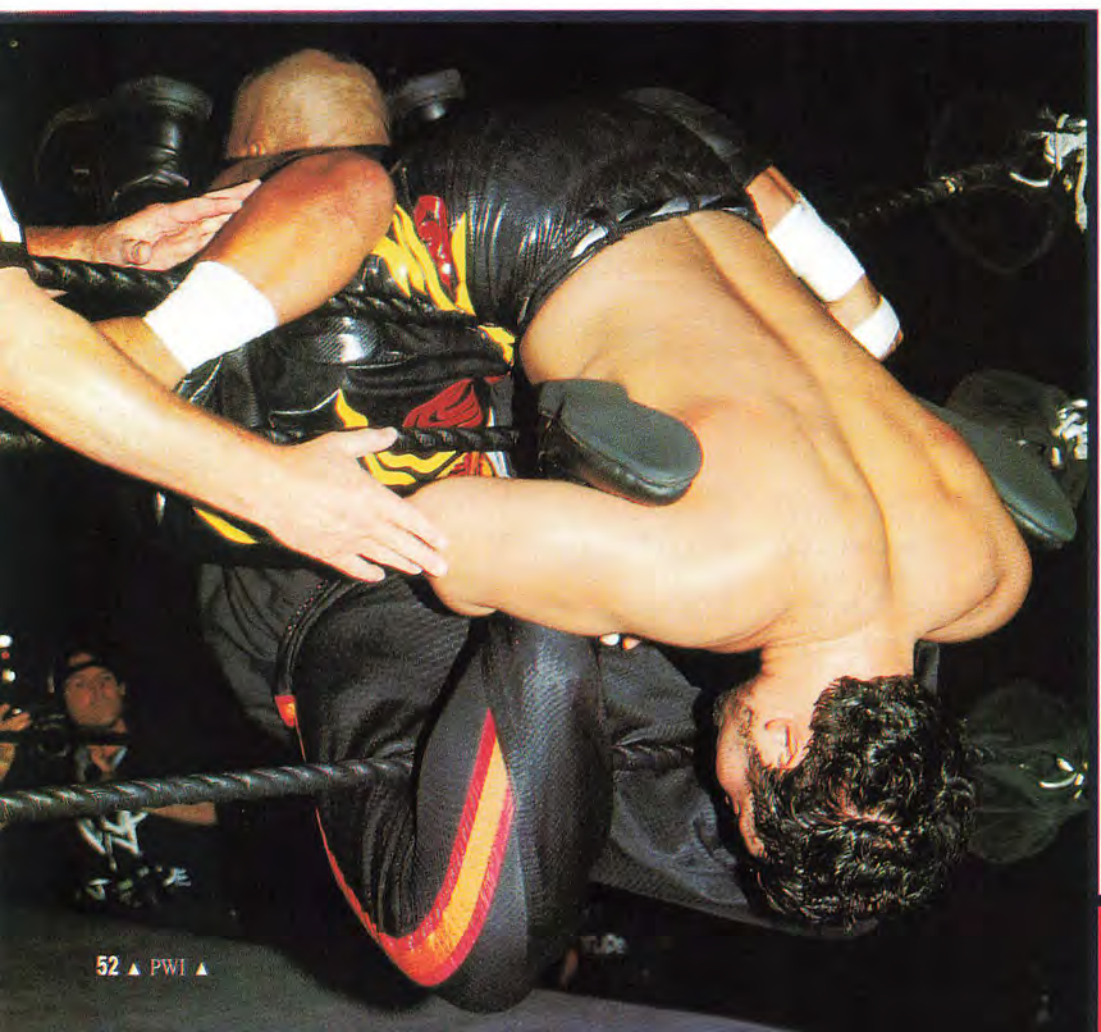
THE STATE OF THE ART

WHILE SOME WRESTLING fans resent the chokehold the WWF currently has on the sport (and rightfully so), the fact is, professional wrestling hasn't seen such an amalgamation of aerial, brawling, and technical styles since the 1950s.

Just two years ago, it seemed most cards consisted of a few short brawls, some T & A, and match-this-high-spot-if-you-can gymnastic meets.

No more. These days, stars such as Rob Van Dam, Lance Storm, and Tajiri are getting more time than ever to show off their technical expertise in the ring. The WWF roster is full of scientific standouts like Chris Jericho, Kurt Angle, Chris Benoit (when healthy), and Christian and Edge. Factor in the influx of ECW and WCW talent, and match quality, for the most part, has improved dramatically.

The catalyst, no doubt, has been the WCW buy-out. Sure, the invasion may not have been as compelling as many hoped it would be. But without the need to push and prod and constantly reinvent the sport, the WWF can let wrestling carry the day. In fact, it's learning that it *must* do that. When there are nights when it has almost as many potential main-eventers sitting out nurs-



Maybe WWF wrestlers could learn something by watching Tajiri execute his tarantula. While it's a stretch to call this a spectacular high spot, it is a crowd pleaser, and it's pretty low risk. WWF wrestlers are making more of an effort to excite crowds without risking their well-being so much.

Put RVD in the ring with a ladder and either Hardy brother and you're guaranteed to get an exciting match. But even most WWF hardcore matches have been toned down of late.

With WCW now part of the WWF, all of the wrestlers in this huge company have to work harder to distinguish themselves. If they're not encouraged to go crazy with high-risk stunts, they must go in another direction.

ing serious injuries as it has main-eventers available to wrestle, something's wrong. The WWF realized that the increase in injuries in the last year had something to do with the increased number of risks wrestlers were taking in the ring.

After a while, topping the stunt that was pulled at last month's pay-per-view becomes impossible.

As a result, we've seen a fairly dramatic decline in the number of hardcore and gimmick matches. Even the Dudleys' popular 3D-through-a-table postmatch ritual is seemingly reserved only for special occasions. The thrill-seeking Hardy Boyz are using Matt's mat-based twist of fate finisher as often as Jeff's swanton dive from the top turnbuckle.

But make no mistake, pro wrestling is not in the throes of a roots revival. Smashmouth wrestling, as in the kind we see from Kane, Test, The Undertaker, and Rhyno is still as popular as ever. So is the brawling brand practiced by the APA, Dudleys, and Raven. However, it can't be denied that Kurt Angle's technical acumen has caused Steve Austin to diversify his two-fisted attack. Likewise, Booker T's athleticism has prompted a slightly more sophisticated response from The Rock.

And when it comes to the high-flying stuff, Jeff Hardy vs. Rob Van Dam is routinely judged to be the top match

Smashmouth wrestling is Bradshaw's specialty, and it's a style of wrestling that's probably never going to go completely out of style. The big bruisers love to brawl.

of any card it's on. Let's face it: High spots are like hockey fights. Many people claim not to like them, but the crowd is always at its loudest when they happen. And nobody changes the channel when they're about to occur. But even Jim Ross has suggested that all WWF wrestlers need to tell stories in their matches using fewer high spots, that high spots should *not* be the only way to get a response from the crowd.

An analogy certain ECW wrestlers used to make during that promotion's heyday bears repeating here. When you set out to prepare Thanksgiving dinner, you don't make just turkey or just potatoes. You prepare a little bit of everything to give those at your table a choice of things to enjoy. That's what the WWF is trying to do now—give fans a little bit of everything so they will find at least something that they enjoy, and perhaps will find that they love a small portion of everything. If all you give them are stunts, that's all they'll expect to see.

It's a fairly sound approach, provided fans who have gotten so used to high spots and stunts don't tune out as things get toned down.

To its credit, the WWF has apparently found a way to blend the best elements of WCW, ECW, and its own federation. But just how long the balance will last remains to be seen. Some discouraging signs still exist.

First, despite being given more time to show their stuff, wrestlers like Tajiri, Storm, and Chris Kanyon, whom many count as a true in-ring innovator, are often cast in comedy roles or portrayed as less than competent. Tazz, generally accepted as one of the sport's most gifted technical stars, is routinely squashed, beaten, or humiliated on *Raw* and *Smackdown.* The Hurricane (Shane Helms), a solid cruiserweight, portrays a silly comic book superhero a la Owen Hart's Blue Blazer. Perry Saturn, who demonstrated his ability in ECW and WCW, is gaining fame not for his explosive strength or fierce competitive nature, but for being in love with a mop.

These wrestlers would serve the WWF, and wrestling in general, if the WWF groomed them to be the next class of superstars, instead of pawns in the federation's never-ending defamation campaign against its nonexistent competition. They might be funny now, but the goofier they get, the harder it will be to portray them as legitimate threats sometime in the future.

Neither has the WWF been infallible when it comes to handling its own stars. Christian, for example, is being given a major singles push not on the basis of his formidable talents, but on the atrocities he's willing to commit with a chair.

While having a monopoly on the sports entertainment industry gives the WWF an embarrassment of riches in

With its roster so bloated, the WWF is using a lot of very talented wrestlers—especially *Alliance* wrestlers—as comedy figures. Tazz, who was so feared in ECW, is routinely humiliated now. But it's hard to transform comedy wrestlers into legitimate contenders if they've been laughed at for so long.

terms of talent, it has also led to a problem: too many people on its roster. And that could have a direct effect on which direction the in-ring action takes place in the near future.

Not only did the WCW buyout affect the pro ranks, it has also had a profound impact on the independent leagues, where new moves and holds are constantly being attempted, practiced, and perfected.

With the WWF roster already cluttered, cutting-edge talents like Kid Kash and Super Crazy have found it difficult to get work. Even Jerry Lynn, who signed with the WWF, has had trouble cracking the lineup on even a semi-regular basis. These superstars are wrestling in relative anonymity. And talented indy stars have little hope of making it to the big time.

What's worse is that many independent promotions are scrambling to sign unemployed big-name performers (at least those they can afford). That just pushes one more indy wrestler off the card.

Given wrestling's cyclical nature, fans should probably just be happy to witness a mild renaissance in traditional wrestling. And if the young wrestlers who are dreaming about someday having careers in the WWF find out that they need to know more than how to execute swanton bombs off balconies and through three tables, or to bloody foes with baseball bats wrapped in barbed wire to make it big, that bodes well for the future of the sport.

But it could be just a matter of time before we're forced to endure the first-ever ladies hardcore swimsuit pool match. □

Kid Kash was one of the most exciting high-flyers in the game when ECW was up and running. Still is, actually. It's just that he's a man without a major promotion to call home. These days you can have all the talent in the world and still not make it big.

Like almost every other type of business, pro wrestling has been victimized by the recession. Fortunately, the WWF—the industry flagship—is well-equipped to withstand the economy's downturn

THE STATE OF THE BUSINESS

If it seems like Vince McMahon has lost a little of that famous swagger of his, maybe he has. These aren't the best of times for the WWF. There are plenty of reasons for concern. But the McMahons have seen to it that the WWF is prepared for some difficult times.

IT'S REMARKABLE HOW the success of pro wrestling mirrors the health of the overall economy. During the last century, wrestling prospered during the stock-soaring 1920s, the postwar boom of the '50s, the Reagan era of the '80s, and the technological revolution of the mid- to late-'90s. Correspondingly, wrestling sank into the doldrums during the Great Depression of the '30s, the energy shortage of the '70s, and the recession of the early-'90s.

Spectator events such as pro wrestling are among the hardest hit during troubled economic times. The money going into the industry is directly tied to discretionary spending, and that's where families tighten their budgets first.

While the United States and the rest of the world is either in recession or almost there, the World Wrestling Federation has sheltered itself better than most from the impending fiscal storm.

Here are the obvious downsides for the WWF: House show attendance, pay-per-view buy rates, and merchandise sales will probably drop over the next several months. It will be tempting to blame Vince McMahon, his wrestlers, and the creative staff for the bad business, but one must remember that many fans will stay home regardless of the product's quality.

There's a possible upside. More than ever, WWFE revenue depends on advertising rates for its television programs. While there will be fewer advertising dollars to be gained in a recession, more people will remain home and watch television for their entertainment. Ratings for *Raw* and *Smackdown* could

The return of The Rock to WWF TV (and his subsequent feud with Booker T) gave ratings a boost this summer, though they did drop again after a few weeks. With the war on terrorism beginning, will business in the WWF take a more severe downturn?

then rise in the coming months, as they did in midsummer. With more people at home switching channels, the WWF has a shot at regaining previous viewers and attracting new ones.

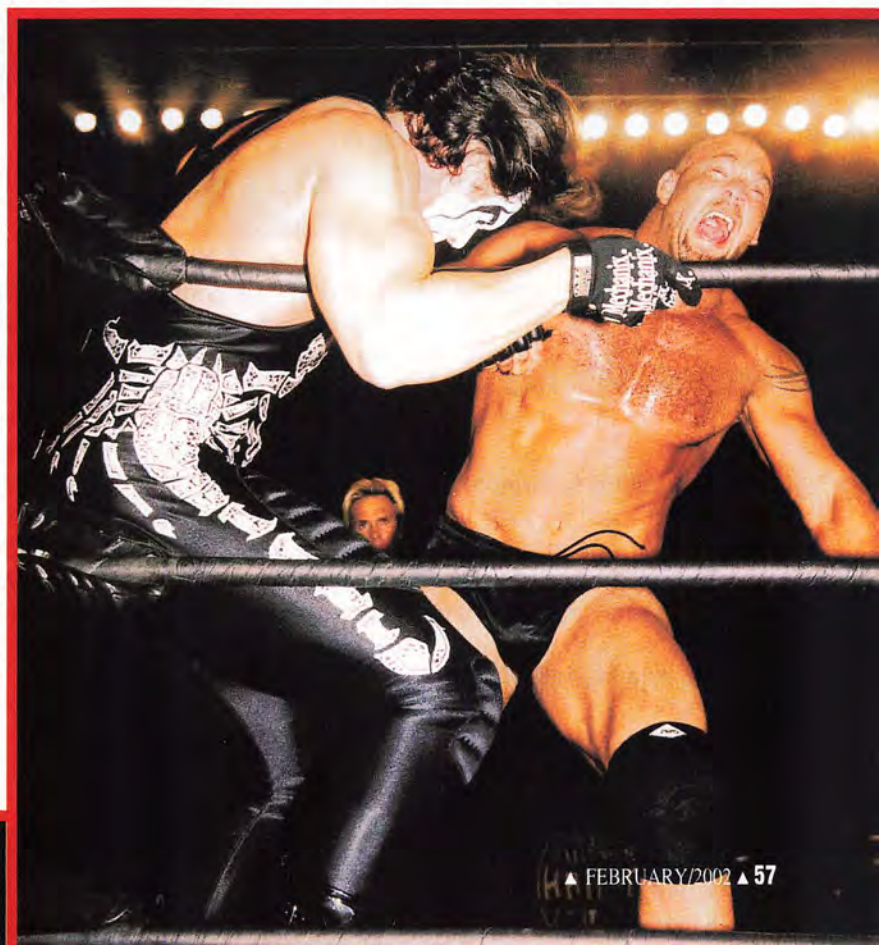
Launching WCW at this time would be a good idea, at least for the sake of offering a viewing alternative. It would be understandable if the McMahons want to delay WCW-only house shows and pay-per-views until the economy improves. Nevertheless, the growing importance of TV revenue to WWFE's overall earnings picture underlines the need for an independent WCW program. *WWF Excess,* which is scoring lower ratings than *Livewire* and *Superstars* did in most weeks, isn't cutting it.

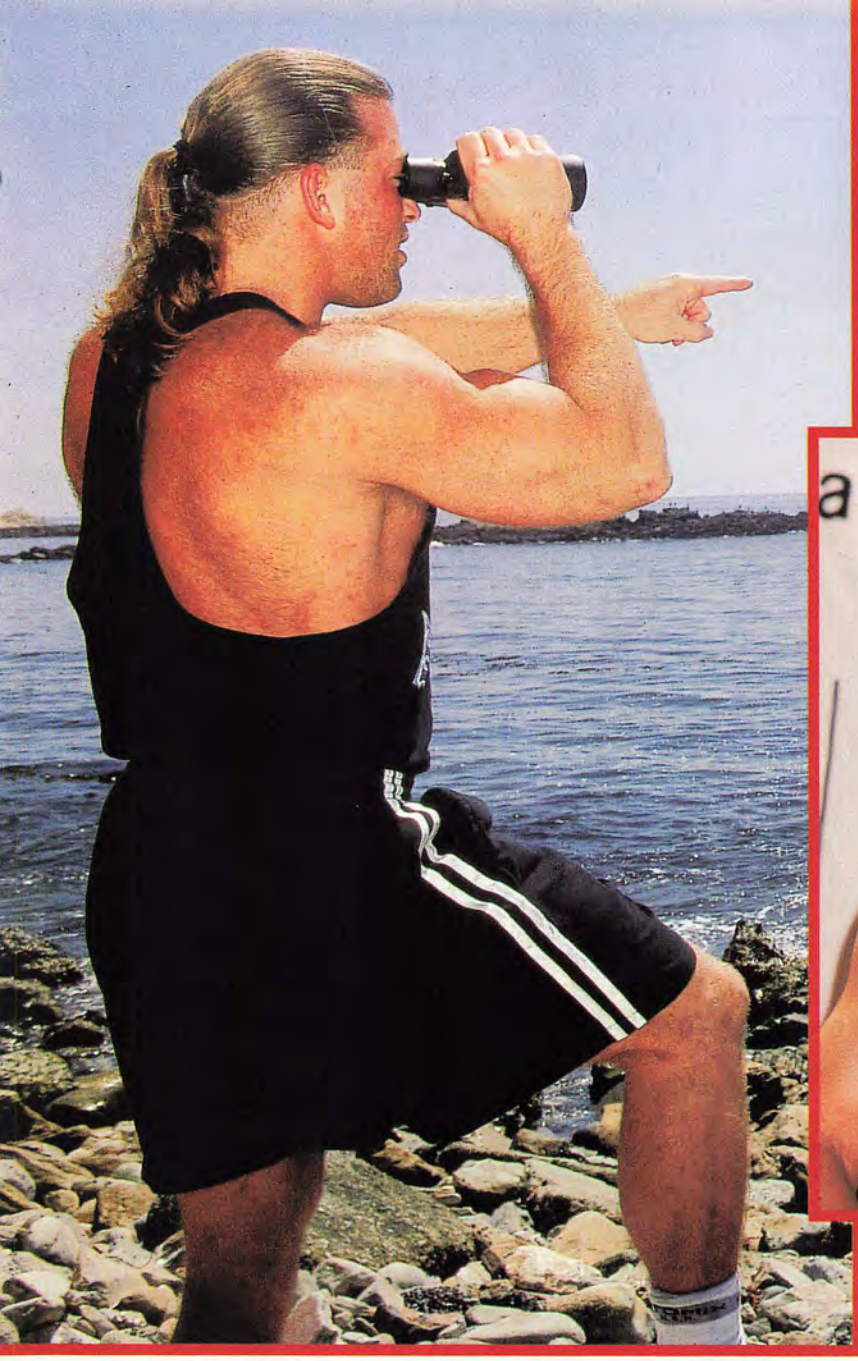
As a company, WWFE couldn't be in better shape to withstand an economic downturn. The infusion of investment capital when WWFE went public in the fall of 1999 helped boost the company's worth to a staggering $850-million. It hit the $1.1-billion mark a few months later. WWFE's current worth is estimated to be slightly less than that right now.

The WWFE stock price has fallen steadily throughout 2001. After reaching a high of $22.50 per share on September 14, 2000, the price eventually dropped to $10.50 on July 31 of this year. The price fell drastically with each passing week of the XFL season.

The sagging overall economy prevented WWFE from making a better rebound. The stock price did spike a bit

Goldberg isn't expecting to be in the WWF anytime soon, and it's unlikely Vince McMahon will spend the money necessary to get him right now. There might be more viable ways to go about sparking fan interest in the federation anyway.





Chyna became a prime example of what happens when you underestimate the power of the WWFE monopoly. She was looking for big money when it came time to negotiate a new contract. Negotiations didn't last long.

Does RVD see the day on which the Alliance will have its own TV show and touring schedule anywhere on the horizon? Even with the world in a state of turmoil, it may be a good idea to go for it sooner rather than later.

when WWFE purchased WCW, but that fizzled within a few weeks.

Fortunately, there have been no repercussions on Wall Street because of WWFE's failure to launch WCW as a separate brand. That might be seen as a failure by pure wrestling fans, but financial investors—most of whom don't understand the influence of storylines on the business—probably don't realize the long-term benefits of a separate WCW promotion. In fact, any grandiose plans to relaunch WCW could have a negative effect on the stock.

WWFE's purchase of WCW proves that a near-monopolization of an industry doesn't always result in increased revenues. Wrestling is not a finite pie. The disintegration of WCW and ECW was, in some part, due to fading interest in wrestling as a whole. The WWF simply did a better job of retaining the fans who were left, though a lot of old WCW fans didn't make the switch once WCW was sold.

In addition, there was no indication that the demise of WCW and ECW substantially increased the WWF's ticket, pay-per-view, or merchandise revenue.

WWFE has saved money in one crucial category: wrestler salaries. While the WWF might consider raises for Kurt Angle, The Rock, Steve Austin, and Triple-H,

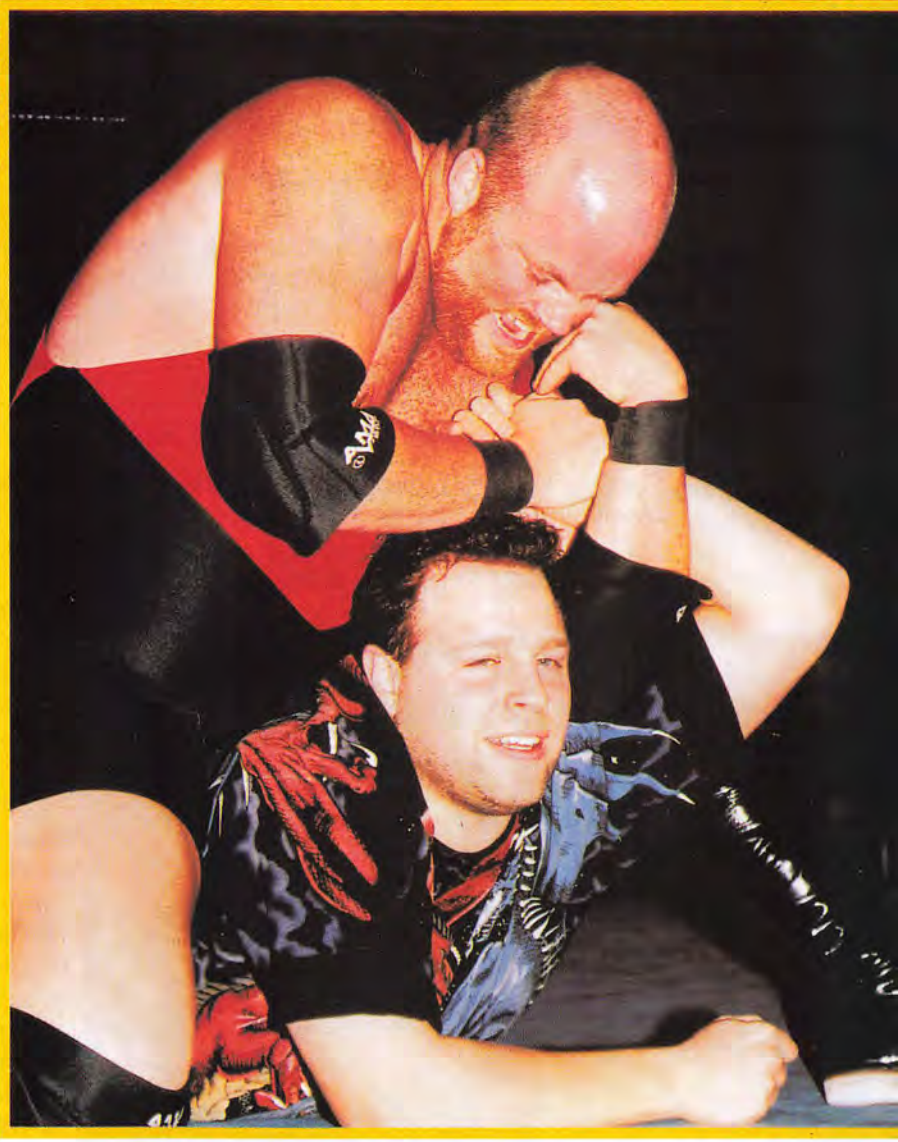
there's a good chance that salaries for mid-carders and even stars near the top tier will decrease. And there will likely be talent cuts—perhaps very significant ones—soon. Now that defections to ECW or a Turner-owned WCW are out of the equation, the WWF can pay just enough to keep wrestlers coming to work ... and not much more.

Chyna entered contract renegotiations with the intention of being paid nearly as much as The Rock and Steve Austin. When she held firm on her price, the WWF halted negotiations completely. Chyna realized the hard way that, without WCW or ECW as an alternative, no one has leverage anymore.

Consider the case of Bill Goldberg. The WWF would have to pay at least $3- to $4-million to buy out Goldberg's AOL Time Warner contract and get him to the negotiating table, and most likely another $1-million for his first annual salary. That's a total of $5-million. Although Goldberg-Austin has been a dream match touted for the past three-plus years, the McMahons have so far opted not to pursue "Da Man." It would be cheaper, and probably just as effective, to groom new stars who can potentially generate as much excitement as Goldberg. The WWF is on the verge of doing that with Rob Van Dam right now.

The McMahons aren't necessarily being greedy. They're being fiscally responsible.

Former WCW and ECW stars gave East Coast independent promotions a small boost in the spring and summer of this year. Dustin Rhodes, Shannon Moore, David Flair, Steve Corino, The Sandman, Mikey Whipwreck, C.W. Anderson, Nova, Little Guido Maritato, Tony Mamaluke, and Simon Diamond are among those who flooded the indy circuit.



The business news from the independent circuit isn't exactly great, either. Although former ECW stars like C.W. Anderson and Mikey Whipwreck (as well as some former WCW mid-carders) have had more time to work the indies, the scene isn't flourishing.

Old arenas and armories hosted wrestling for the first time in years. John Collins' Main Event Championship Wrestling has tried to capitalize on this expanded talent pool the most, but has yet to become a major force.

Although no one is expecting a grand indy revival, all promotions—large and small—should position themselves for wrestling's next great boom. It might take a few years, but it will come. □

With no major federations to compete with, can Vince McMahon and the WWF lead professional wrestling into an exciting new era, or is the McMahon monopoly bad for everyone?

THE STATE OF THE FUTURE

WITH THE DESTINY of professional wrestling firmly in the grip of Vince McMahon and the WWF, the natural question is this: When will another federation rise up to rival the McMahons' mighty empire? The answer, in all likelihood: not for a while.

Like it or not, at least the immediate future of wrestling is up to Vince McMahon and family. And when you consider that both Stephanie and Shane figure prominently in the ring and behind the scenes, you can see that Vinnie Mac has a good chance to rule the sport for years to come—either with hands-on control or vicariously through his children.

The faithful World Wrestling Federation fans take great pride in this fact, but let's face it: The current arrangement does not bode well for the future of those put off by McMahon's totalitarianism or his approach to wrestling.

Of course, you can't argue with the WWF's success. But you can (and should) express concern over just how well the promotion's monopoly serves the average fan. Whether you care to admit it or not, what went down in ECW and WCW rings during the mid-'90s was just as much a part of the WWF's ascent as Vince's leadership and resourcefulness. Anyone who couldn't recognize the influence of both promotions on the WWF was watching *Raw* with blinders on.

Unfortunately for Vince and the fans, there are no more envelope-pushing ECW matches taking place at the ECW Arena or Hammerstein Ballroom for the WWF cognoscenti to draw ideas from. There's no more WCW to challenge the WWF in the ratings.

Given Vince's oft-discussed competitive

"They got the whole world in their hands ..." Not quite, but close. The McMahons may be at war on WWF TV, but they're in firm control of the wrestling business in the U.S. right now. There's a good chance they'll remain in control for years to come.

personality, one has to ask: Can he lead professional wrestling into 2002 and beyond without a worthy opponent to push him?

Vince McMahon's track record speaks for itself. Like so many wrestlers have told us over the years, however, it takes a lot to win a title, but it takes a whole lot more to keep a title. It takes top-notch opponents who can force you to get better and better and better.

Indeed, competition is scarce these days. And given the state of the economy and the fact that no national cable network is desperately searching for someone to provide it with pro wrestling programming, it doesn't figure to get plentiful in the near future.

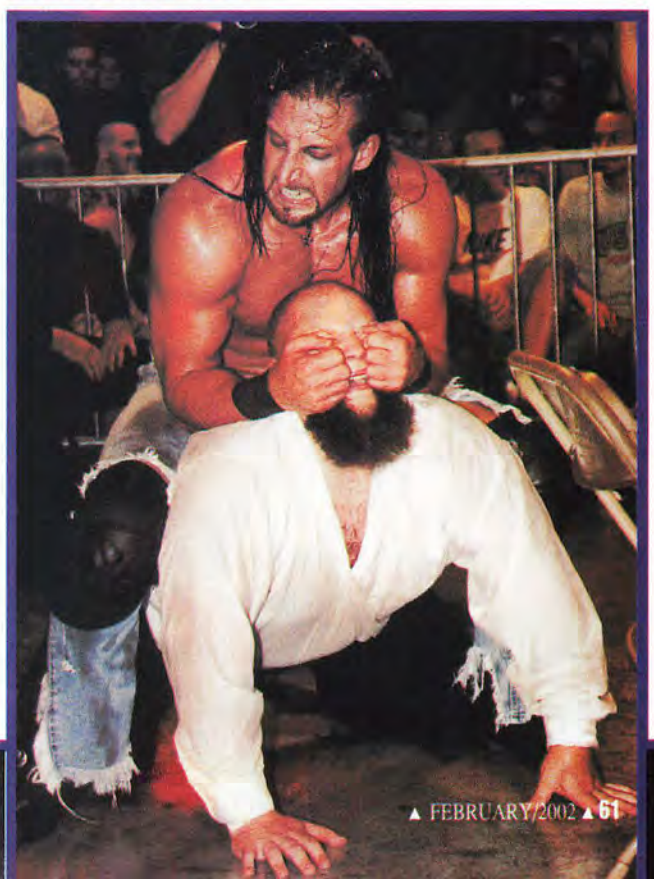
Yet there's been no shortage of scuttlebutt concerning new promotions taking shape. As of press time, however, it seems these organizations pose no threat to the WWF.

For example, Matrats (recently renamed New Generation Wrestling), a Calgary-based promotion headed in part by former WCW President Eric Bischoff, continues to operate. But this group, which features teenage wrestlers, is still regarded as a project, and no one touts it as an emerging rival for the WWF.

Another promotion, Main Event Championship Wrestling, fronted by the mysterious John Collins, made some headlines on the Internet during the summer, particularly after it ran a free show (featuring stars such as Buff Bagwell, Curt Hennig, Sabu, and The Sandman) at the ECW Arena and had to turn several hundred fans away because the building was already packed.

But Collins alienated some big-name talent soon thereafter and turned over control to former ECW co-owner Tod Gordon. After several September shows in the Northeast were canceled (due to the terrorist

Hulk Hogan found that getting his Universal Studios project off the ground was more taxing than a slobberknocker with Ric Flair (above). Crowbar and Roadkill were among the many ex-Big Three stars on the first MECW show in Philadelphia this summer (below). Now neither Hogan nor MECW seems to be a threat to the McMahons.



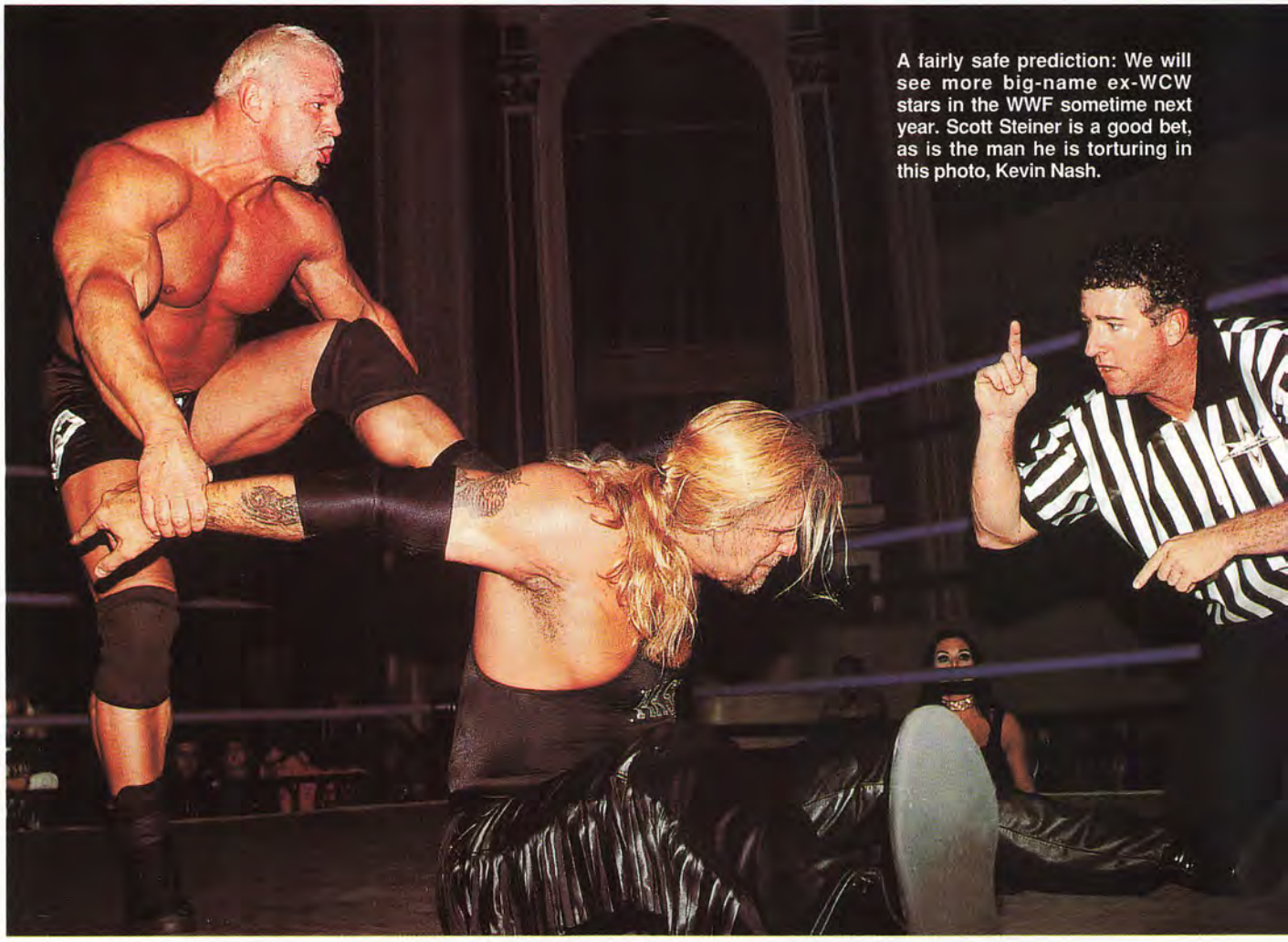
RVD is a big part of the future of the WWF. Good luck finding anyone who doesn't believe that. He has the skills and plenty of attitude.

If the WWF was still in a ratings war and desperate to add exciting and fresh talent to its TV shows, it might have been tempted to call up young stars like Russ and Charlie Haas months ago. Since it's the only big game in town, the federation can afford to take its time developing talent.

attacks on New York City), the company's future didn't look all that bright. Plus, talk of the much-ballyhooed Universal Studios wrestling venture, which was to be spearheaded by Hulk Hogan, has virtually stopped.

Practically speaking, Vince still has the best of the best at his disposal—and that's no small upshot. He can experiment a bit without fear of losing rating points to any other wrestling organization. Even if those experiments peter out, like the WCW invasion seems to have, McMahon still has his biggest draws—Steve Austin, The Rock, and Kurt Angle—to fall back on, plus two studs—Triple-H and Chris Benoit—coming back from injuries. That gives the WWF even more depth at the top of the card.

And like Angle and Triple-H a few years ago, Rob Van Dam seems destined for a long and exciting run as a WWF main-eventer. By all appearances, he's leapfrogged Chris



A fairly safe prediction: We will see more big-name ex-WCW stars in the WWF sometime next year. Scott Steiner is a good bet, as is the man he is torturing in this photo, Kevin Nash.

Jericho and Edge as the next to be given a spot in the federation's upper echelon.

Then we must consider the possibility of someone like Scott Steiner joining the ranks. His presence could provide enough juice to keep the WWF strong for years to come.

The biggest perk of having such a cache of talent is time. Vince can now keep some of the underdeveloped talent in places like Ohio Valley Wrestling until he thinks they're totally ready for the callup. That means better wrestling, better promos, and better shows down the road. Fans will not have to settle for the steady parade of greenhorns WCW trotted out on *Nitro* before the ax finally fell.

The downside of this is the WWF has *too much* talent under contract right now. If it does finally split the WWF roster into two and launch WCW as a separate promotion, that won't be a problem. And you can bet the McMahons will be desperate to prove that despite what happened with the XFL, they are capable of building brand names. If the WCW relaunch doesn't happen, perhaps the WWF could expand into Europe and run shows regularly there.

Still, without another company to defeat, without any other organization nipping at the WWF's heels, even the prospect of certain dream matches are just a tad less tantalizing than they would have been a few years ago.

There's no way around it. Vince McMahon has professional wrestling sewn up with a superior roster in place and the best young talent locked up in the minor leagues. But with no one left to stoke his creative fire, all he has left to battle are yesteryear's ratings.

Will fans be buying up tickets at breakneck pace a year from now? Will they continue to watch every Monday and Thursday without fail? Or will wrestling, as it has done so often in the past, limp into a down cycle?

The future of professional wrestling depends on whether or not the WWF can top his past accomplishments. One thing is certain: Vince McMahon will push everyone—himself included—to get the most out of the company's considerable talent both in the ring and behind the scenes. □

NYPD
Marmot

GOLDBERG
"I WILL BE BACK!"
But how long will we have to wait?

The speculation can end. Goldberg has broken his silence. We now know what he's doing, what he's thinking, and what the state of his game is. Yes, wrestling is in his future, but when and where?

By Ross Forman

SITTING WITH WHAT seemed like an endless supply of sushi in front of him, Bill Goldberg finally spoke. It was early-September in a quaint, quiet, and quite traditional Japanese restaurant in Fallbrook, California, about an hour north of San Diego. It was only four years earlier—almost to the day—and just two states away that he set out on what would be an unforgettable journey.

That journey started with what at the time seemed like a seemingly insignificant match—Goldberg's *Nitro* debut against Hugh Morrus in Salt Lake City. It reached its apex less than 10 months later, when Goldberg pinned Hulk Hogan for the WCW World title in Atlanta, as about 40,000 adoring fans chanted his name inside the cavernous Georgia Dome.

By that point it was clear to all who were watching that Goldberg was "Da Man," that he represented both the present and the future of WCW.

Sure, Sting always was the franchise, and players like Ric Flair, Kevin Nash, Lex Luger, and others were main-eventers throughout their runs with the company, but once he arrived, Bill Goldberg was indisputably "Da Man."

Following an electrifying six-month run as WCW champion in 1998, his much-hyped winning streak came to an end in December. What followed were two years marred by controversy and injury.

Photo By Ross Forman

Photo By Ross Forman

Goldberg had a chance to bring a little goodwill to everyone who worked so diligently at Ground Zero in New York City this fall.

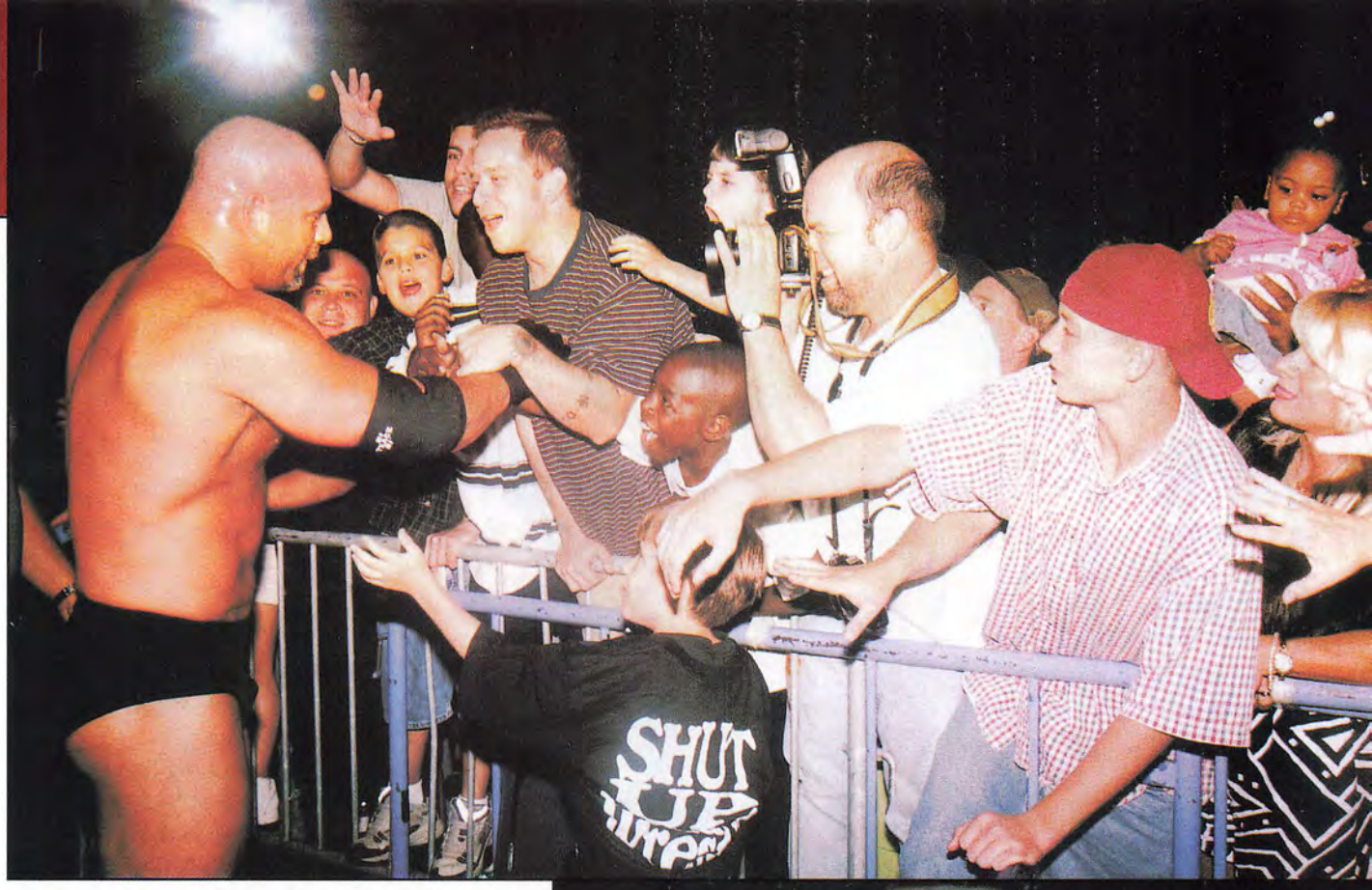
Goldberg was put out of the sport—from a storyline perspective—at the company's Sin pay-per-view, held January 14, 2001, in Indianapolis. Lex Luger and Buff Bagwell—again, per storyline—gloated after the PPV that they were responsible for ending a *second* winning streak that Creative Director Vince Russo mandated Goldberg maintain if he wished to keep his job. No one realized at the time that it really was the last match he would wrestle for WCW.

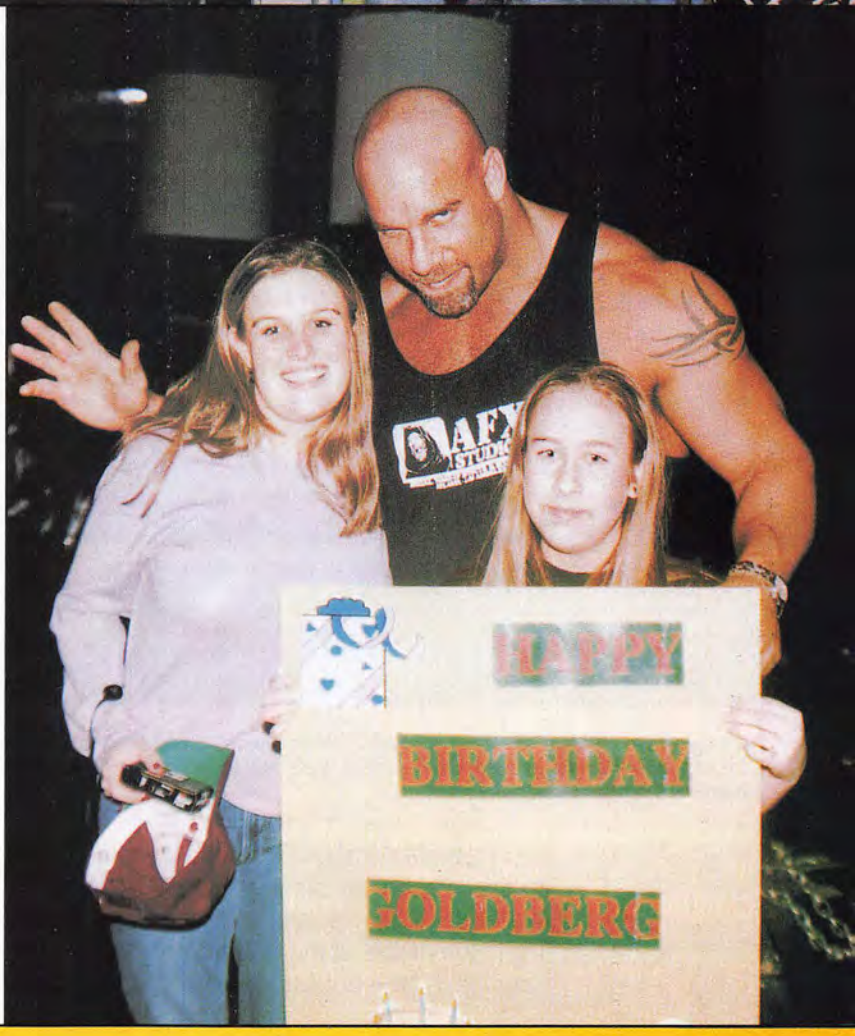
WCW as we knew it was gone 71 days later, following the March 26 *Nitro* from Panama City, Florida, swallowed up by the World Wrestling Federation.

Vince McMahon's WWFE grabbed the name, but not many of its prized players. No Nash. No Flair. No Sting. No Luger. No Rick or Scott Steiner. And certainly no Goldberg. The WWF acquired a bunch of mostly young, inexperienced wrestlers, such as members of The Natural Born Thrillers, Kwee Wee, and Elix Skipper, plus mid-carders such as Hugh Morrus, Lance Storm, Chris Kanyon, and Mike Awesome. The only big names to make the jump were Dallas Page and Booker T.

No Goldberg.

And virtually no chance of signing Goldberg, who is among a small group of WCW stars boasting guaranteed, non-transferable contracts. AOL Time Warner is obligated to pay Goldberg for the duration of his contract; all he has to do, in essence, is wake up. AOL Time Warner doesn't have a wrestling company anymore, which is what it signed Goldberg to work for. So he'll get





Although he admits to always thinking negatively about the business, he's never too busy to make fans happy. Whether it was the people who just came out to see him wrestle (above) or those who appreciate him even when he's not in a ring (right), "Da Man" has nothing but good things to say about the fans.

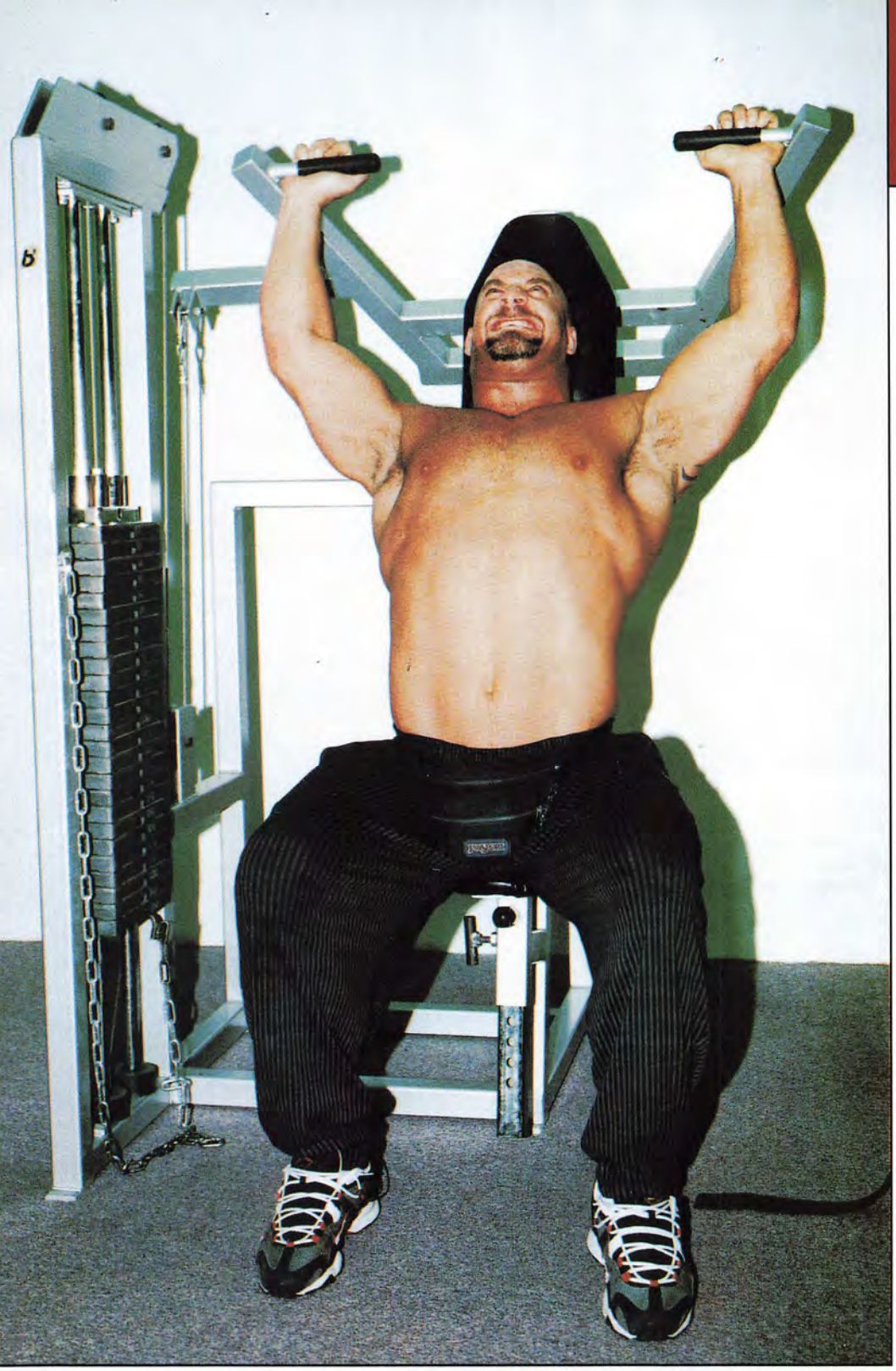
paid quite nicely for doing nothing for the next two-plus years.

"The beginning of the end started January 14," he said during this, his first in-depth interview of the year. "I had shoulder surgery in early-February, something that was imminent, not the reason they put me out. They put me out because it was so ridiculous that I didn't have a title shot. They either had to do something to get rid of me or they had to give me a shot—and then figure out who was going to take the title off me.

"Ever since then, all hell broke loose."

The rumors began making the rounds in 2000. WCW was going to be sold, but to whom? In January 2001, Eric Bischoff led a group from Fusient Media Ventures that was ready to close the deal. Until, that is, a stunning announcement from AOL Time Warner came down in March. Two of its two major cable networks, TNT and TBS (the respective homes of *Nitro* and *Thunder),* were no longer going to air professional wrestling.

Adios, Eric … hello, Vince.



Just because he's not wrestling now and probably won't do so again for about another two years, it doesn't mean Goldberg neglects his body. He's still in the gym all the time, although his training regimen has changed.

In a matter of days, McMahon's name came to the forefront as the buyer of WCW, and on March 26, 2001, Shane McMahon was standing in the middle of the ring in Panama City, announcing he—not his dad—had purchased WCW. Storyline hype, sure, but also incredible TV. Just ask Goldberg.

"I watched the Panama City *Nitro* unfold on TV just like all the fans," he said. "They tried to get me to go there, but I didn't have my medical release. I wasn't going for anything, as much as I would have loved to have been there to help. My hands were tied.

"That was the end of the wrestling business, as far as I was concerned; it was like Armageddon, D-Day. It was the end of an era. It was sad, knowing that everything was going down. It was like we had been overthrown. Vince McMahon monopolized the business. You gotta have competition, no matter what arena you are in."

Now recovered from the shoulder surgery and other lingering injuries, Goldberg says he is completely healthy. He weighs 280 pounds, about 15 pounds less than his wrestling weight.

"I feel great," he said. "During my whole wrestling career, I don't think I ever felt better than I do right now, except for the fact that I'm not 300 pounds and shredded. But then again, I don't have to be. Fact is, I go to the gym daily out of an addiction and a re-

Goldberg and Rick Steiner spent a lot of time with New York City firemen (above), and "Da Man" even brought a big smile to the face of one police officer (right) in the weeks following the horrific terrorist attacks.

spect for my body. But I don't treat training like I used to, because it's not my job anymore to be 300 pounds. It's now just my job to be physically fit so I can walk the planet for as long as I can. I don't have to shove 15,000 calories down my throat to be this walking machine."

Goldberg says his lone ailment is a sore spine that he got from riding his motorcycle too much. And, he jokes, he will soon install a voice-activated remote control on his TV so he doesn't injure his thumb.

He has homes in suburban, er, *remote* suburban Atlanta and San Diego and an abundance of cars, motorcycles, and animals at both. He remained silent about the wrestling business for the first eight months of the year by choice. These days, he watches maybe one hour of WWF programming per month. And his list of phone friends from within the wrestling community is limited to people like Rick Steiner, Robbie Rage (from the High Voltage tag team), and Big Bossman. He has spoken with Sting and Hulk Hogan a couple of times each since the sale—and that's about it.

I must admit that I, too, am among Gold-

Photos By Ross Forman

Goldberg on...

During the course of his conversation with Ross Forman, Goldberg was asked for his opinions on a few people and subjects. As should be expected by now, he didn't hold back on anything.

Goldberg on Vince Russo:

"I didn't think he was allowed out of his house. I truly believed I had condemned him to his dwelling. The only thing I can say about Vince Russo is he's a stain! That's it, period. There's nothing devious enough, or conniving, evil, disgusting, vindictive that could be done to him that would even touch the surface of what I would like to do to him.

"I often hear people say, 'What killed WCW?' Well, the lack of good, well-guided management did. I think the people that were running the company were qualified, but for what, I don't know. They may have been professionals, but it was obvious that wrestling was not their endeavor by any stretch. Thus, we imploded. The end of WCW started on Vince Russo's first day. And the final blow was the day Brad Siegel started believing him."

Goldberg on Triple-H:

"He and I would make a lot of money together. That's how I look at it now. There are so many people who know how I feel about him, and how he thinks he feels about me. But in reality, he doesn't feel that way. Face-to-face, there's no way he'd feel that way. Hey, I'll spare his life for money, but only for money. He's not worth anything other than that."

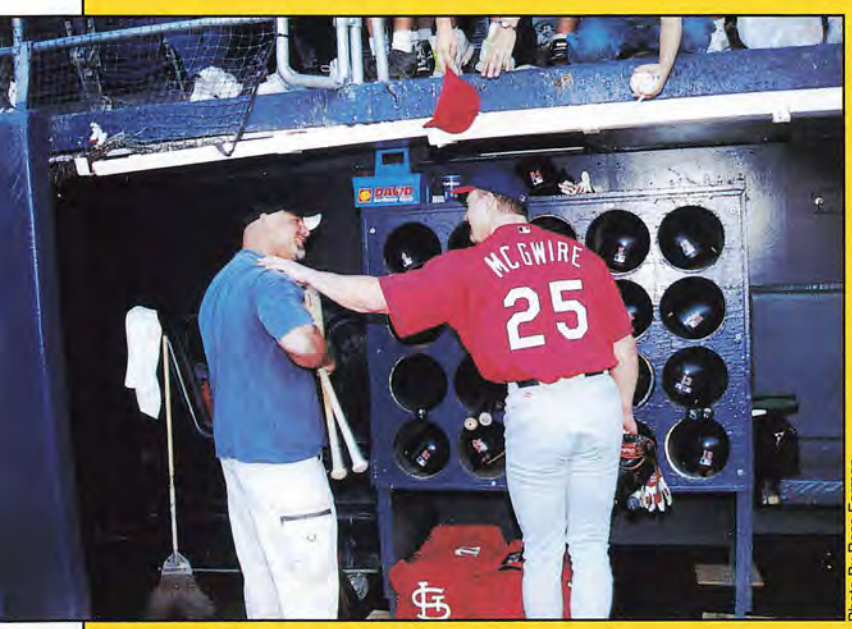


Photo By Ross Forman

Goldberg chats it up with McGwire

The Goldberg-HHH verbal war started a couple of years ago, when HHH (who, ironically, has the same agent as Goldberg) questioned the then-injured WCW superstar. He said Goldberg didn't want to return to action, that he was milking his injury when the company needed him most. So would Goldberg work for the WWF, especially considering HHH's relationship with Stephanie McMahon?

"All I want is presidential veto power," he said. "It's widely known that I'm not the best guy when it comes to developing angles or storylines, but I can refine anything; I'm a perfectionist at that. Kevin Nash is very good at it. I know I am not. That's just not my forte."

Goldberg on Scott Hall:

"He's not dead yet?! I thought they would have beaten him to death in Japan, or he would have drank himself to death over there.

"I've got very differing opinions about Scott. Kevin and I are friends. Scott is Kevin's best friend. So I kind of hold back at times out of respect for Kev, but Kev knows exactly how I feel. It has nothing to do with him.

"I don't know if Scott Hall has changed; hopefully he has. But if he hasn't, I don't care to have anything to do with him, except if he was a piece of toilet paper—and we all know what you do with toilet paper."

Goldberg on wrestling in Japan:

"I'd love to go to Japan because the people appreciate the business. The people look at it as an art form. There isn't the theatrics in matches as there is in America. In Japan, it's more of a physical confrontation between two people. They look at wrestling in a much different light than we do here in America. They revere it in a much different light."

Goldberg on his friend Mark McGwire:

"I told McGwire to sit back and smell the roses, and to realize that you can't cure cancer by yourself. You can try to make as many people happy as possible, but you can't do it forever and you can't always do it for someone else. There's a time when you sometime have to say, 'Hey, I'm kind of proud of myself. I deserve it,' and not feel guilty about it."

berg's phone friends. We talk about once a week, but usually about mainstream sports or sports autographs —not wrestling. And he rarely has any hot news for me.

"I'm fortunate that through Kevin Nash's recommendation, I had hired Barry Bloom and Michael Braverman as my agents, plus [attorney] Henry Holmes. We formed a team that—again, fortunately—arranged a contract that, when it came down to it, was not transferable to the WWF. I was like the luckiest guy in the world."

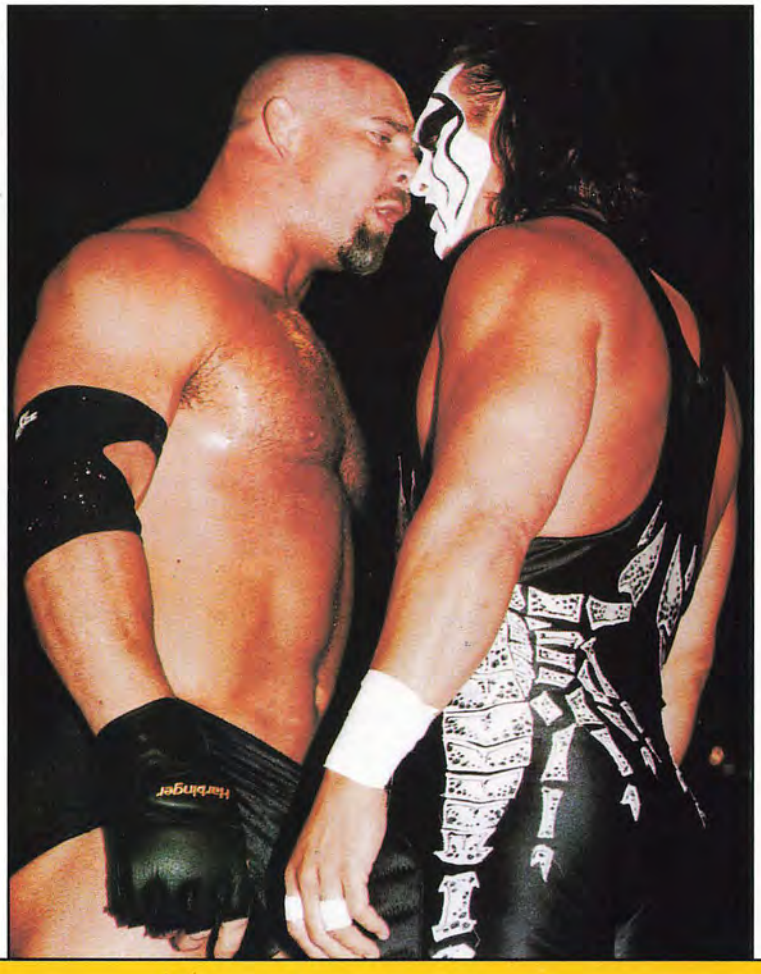
As the WCW ship sank, Goldberg didn't help in the final moments because, well, honestly, he didn't have to. He had his own life preserver and a motorboat waiting to take him safely to shore for the next two-plus years.

"As I've said, I'm the luckiest guy in the world. I now get paid to go to my mailbox every other week," Goldberg said. "I'm not the stupidest guy on the planet. If I can earn a living by sitting at home and not risking my body, that's what I'm going to do. I don't want to be wrestling's version of (former pro football player) Jim Otto, who now has severe difficulties performing daily tasks due to severe football-related injuries.

"When I hear people tell me that they want me back in the ring, it hurts. But it's not gonna make me give up reality; I'm not gonna do it.

Imagine the intensity Goldberg could bring to WWF rings—and matches with superstars such as Steve Austin, The Rock, and Triple-H. He won't say whether he has spoken to Vince McMahon, but many believe he has.

There aren't many people from the world of wrestling whom "Da Man" truly misses. He does miss Kevin Nash's "big, sarcastic self" (above) and has spoken by phone to his old friend/rival Sting a few times (below).



The thing wrestling gave me, other than financial stability, was the ability to put a smile on my face by putting a smile on kids' faces. Even though the rush I got wrestling was unparalleled by everything other than maybe playing football and smashing running backs, it is the kids. Take that away and I don't think too much of the business."

Goldberg still wakes up early every morning, often by 7 a.m., then after his workout at the gym, he spends hours hanging out with his animals or maybe jet skiing. And, of course, helping needy children, be it with an encouraging phone call, by signing a picture, or by answering letters. He recently spent time with Rick Steiner near Ground Zero, lending moral support to New York firemen, police officers, and emergency workers.

"I still have to be Goldberg to as many people who need Goldberg," he said.

"If I could be invisible for the next two-plus years, then come out my front door wearing tights and boots and breathing smoke, brother, I'd really love it. That gives me goose bumps. But the fact is, it's now gonna have to wait. Hopefully, my return is gonna be a bigger, better product. I don't know what the wrestling world is gonna hold when I get back, but until someone buys out my contract or Time Warner pays me out of the contract early, I won't be there. I will, though, be there for kids."

So that means any fans who tune in to *Raw* every week hoping to see Goldberg charge down the ramp and spear Steve Austin into the third row are wasting their time right now.

"There are a lot of obstacles with the WWF," Goldberg explained. "First and foremost, speaking about me wrestling for anyone is a moot

Photo By Ross Forman

Signing an autograph seems like such an insignificant act in a time of tragedy, but if it helps even a little bit, it's the right thing to do, and Goldberg wanted to do anything he could to support the true heroes in New York this fall.

point until I get paid my entire contract. I'm not going to take a 50-cents-on-the-dollar buyout. I signed the contract and am more than willing to fulfill my end of the deal. I'm not going to let them out of the bargain. I don't feel guilty one bit about it from a business perspective. From a fan's perspective, that's another thing."

"Diamond" Dallas Page and Booker T also had guaranteed contracts with AOL Time Warner. Both agreed to accept less guaranteed money just to be a part of the WWF as soon as they could.

Good for them, says Goldberg, but not good for him.

It is widely believed this man whose name was mentioned in the same breath as that of Steve Austin just three years ago has spoken with McMahon multiple times since the sale of WCW. But the two have not negotiated anything because, well, Goldberg can't negotiate. And he won't negotiate—or even comment on discussions he *might* have had with the WWF chairman.

"When Vince acquired WCW, he needed to acquire the people who represented the company," he said. "Vince basically just got one, maybe two, of the top WCW guys, the guys who were and are WCW and always will be. But not the top guys.

"He had to form the Alliance to at least have something for the WWF to feud against. But I'm sorry, and maybe I'm missing something, but there's nobody at ECW who does anything for me. There's no formidable threat from them."

So while Booker T, DDP, Shawn Stasiak, and Kanyon were fighting on behalf of the Alliance this summer, Goldberg kept busy by participating in numerous charity events. He has continued such practices into the fall. He was at the annual Jimmy V event, held to honor the memory of college basketball coach Jim Valvano. He also has been the legendary Goldberg for countless needy youngsters like, for instance, the seven-year-old heart transplant patient whose parents contacted him through his Web site. They told him of their daughter's love for Goldberg—and her lack of interest in taking her needed medication.

Goldberg promptly called the youngster and promised to continue calling each and every week, provided she agreed to take her medication.

"It's almost like I need a disclaimer, because anything negative that is said isn't directed personally at the fans or said about the fans," Goldberg said. "The fact that I don't listen to anything about wrestling now doesn't

One man with whom Goldberg would just as soon never be in the same room is Scott Hall. It's an uncomfortable situation for him: He considers Nash a friend, yet he abhors the man Nash calls his best friend.

have anything to do with the appreciation I have for them and their love for the sport/business. But when I think about wrestling, I think about promoters, I think about bosses, I think about incompetent people writing the stories, and I think about wrestlers stabbing other guys in the back just because. I always think negatively about the business, so I don't associate the business with the fans.

"I've got so many positive memories of WCW, but I've also got so many negative memories. The negative memories seem to far outweigh the positive. I actually have to take time and think about the positive. I really have to dig and try to find those memories."

But they are there, buried below all the bitterness, a lot of memories that were made before he became so jaded.

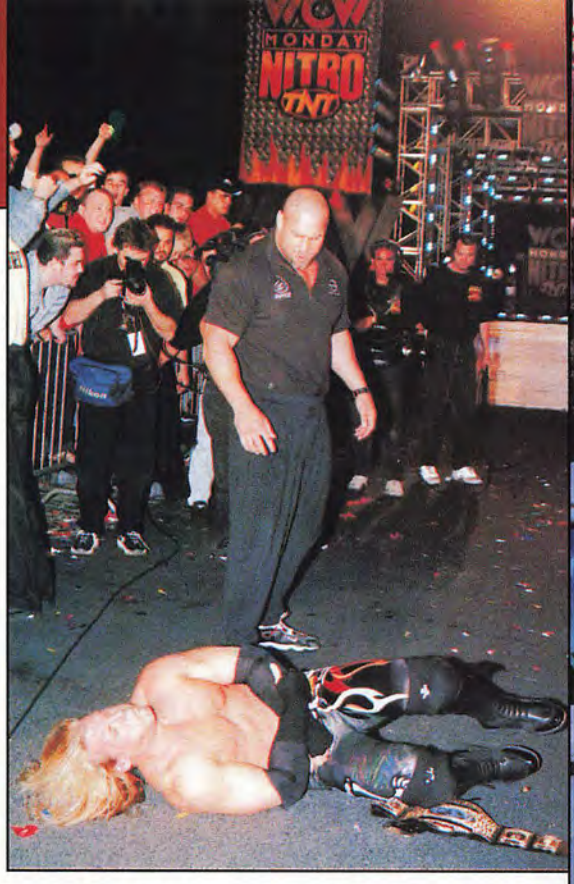
"It kind of seems like just yesterday that I was stepping into the ring on *Nitro* for the first time, against Hugh," he said. "But in the same breath, it seems like eons ago, too." Truly eons ago was a pre-Morrus match against Buddy Landell in Dalton, Georgia, that virtually no one knows about, as was the night on which he told Arn Anderson that he had "no problem putting over Chad Fortune." That, too, was pre-Streak, before the name Goldberg meant anything to a wrestling fan.

If you think Goldberg is glad to be away from wrestling, to be free of the backstabbing and incompetence he had to deal with, you're right ... but only partially right. The sale of WCW has clearly left a void in his life.

"I miss a lot about the business. I really do," he said. "There are, though, a lot more people that I don't miss. I miss all the old-time guys, and I'll say this in a general sense, the guys who offer traditional ideas. I also miss some of the young wrestlers who are building the future of the business. I also miss the locker room atmosphere. I miss Arn Anderson. I miss Ric Flair. I miss Kevin's big, sarcastic self. I miss Sting. As much as I hated some of the other guys, I miss some of them, too. I guess I miss hating them. I miss that fresh feeling of hatred that I have for people; I guess I need them to reinforce the hatred I have for them. Fortunately, seems like they're doing that on their own up at the WWF."

Although he has been a wrestler for less than half a decade and only has experience in one company, he didn't hesitate to offer harsh words to some of his former co-workers who now get their paychecks sent to them from Stamford, Connecticut.

"It's unfortunate that those guys from WCW



A member of the WWF roster who certainly hasn't forgotten how Goldberg treated him is Chris Jericho. It'd be interesting to see these two resume their old WCW feud in the WWF. Maybe in 2003?

are truly getting a taste of the wrestling business, and what it is to work for Vince McMahon," he said. "They had it pretty cushy toward the end of WCW; the inmates were ruling the roost and they were lackadaisical about everything. But it certainly is a business atmosphere up there, and I guarantee you they are shocked at what they are seeing in comparison. There are a lot of guys who deserve the shock and, hopefully, along with the mental shock comes the physical shock, because they need it. They need to understand that it's a real job up there. It is very taxing on you mentally and physically, and if you're not into it, or not tough enough, you can't do it.

"I think there are a lot of those guys with attitudes, but guys like 'Taker are shoving those attitudes right down their throats. First, [the WWF stars] don't appreciate them coming in on their territory. Second, and most important, they don't appreciate their attitudes."

Yet for all the petty, ridiculous, negative stuff about the wrestling business that he absolutely abhors, Goldberg doesn't hesitate to say he is "certain" he will wrestle again, and he "certainly" hopes it will be in the U.S. In fact, "Da Man" went so far as to say he wants to be in a ring the day after his contract expires.

"I'm not Superman, and I'm not anything special, but there are some people out there who think that I am. For those people, I'd hate to deny them the opportunity of me kicking everyone's ass in the wrestling world. That could be quite entertaining." □

(Ross Forman is the former editor of ***WCW Magazine.)***

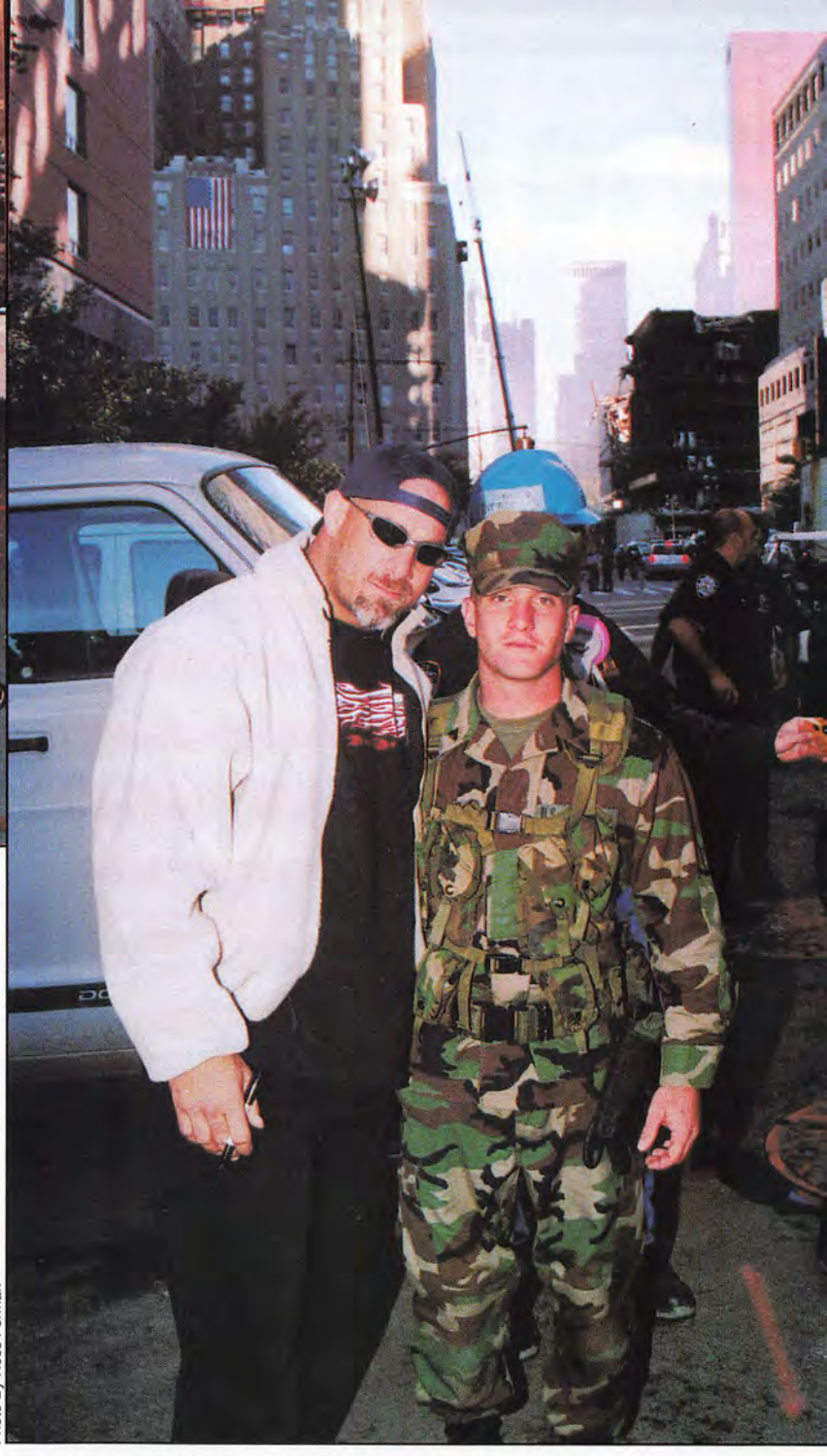


Photo By Ross Forman

Part of the New York City skyline is visible as Goldberg poses with a young man who's serving in the U.S. military.

the business page

By Harry Burkett

Rating the ratings ... The WCW-ECW invasion hasn't paid off as WWFE had hoped, as ratings for *Raw* and *Smackdown* continue to trend slightly downward. As of press time, *Raw* hadn't scored above 5.0 since August 20, following the anticipated return of The Rock. Likewise, *Smackdown* hasn't fully regained its footing since being double-teamed by *Survivor II* and *Friends* earlier in the year.

Kurt Angle really is being touted as a hero in his hometown of Pittsburgh. His recent push in the WWF got played up big (and in a positive way) in one newspaper.

Still, the numbers remain fairly solid. *Raw's* overall rating, consistently in the 4.7 range, could improve as Kurt Angle becomes even more popular and Rob Van Dam receives a more generous push. Because the WWF pushed Angle as a heel for a couple of years before he eventually turned good, the Olympian hasn't garnered true ratings power until now.

Van Dam is another case. He became a main-eventer almost immediately. He emits coolness, allowing him to connect with fans right away. With that going for him, his rise in the WWF could be comparable to Bill Goldberg's previous ascendance in WCW. By adding Triple-H's return in December and Chris Benoit's return early next year, the WWF has reasons to be optimistic. If the long-awaited WCW program ever materializes, that would add another dimension entirely.

Interest in the WWF remains strong, as is evident by the high ratings for *Tough Enough's* season finale on MTV. The live one-hour special scored an overall rating of 2.5, a record for the series. The second half-hour, during which the winner was announced, earned a 2.7.

WWF programming has been most beneficial to The National Network. *Raw*—along with new additions *Star Trek: The Next Generation, Baywatch,* and *V.I.P.*—has, in less than a year, helped the Viacom-owned network lower its median viewing age from 53 to 36, which is very appealing to the advertising community. Nevertheless, TNN's overall prime time rating is only 1.0—well below USA, TBS, and TNT. From that perspective, *Raw's* overall rating—even with an average of 4.7—is far better than any other program on the TNN schedule.

Angle as icon ... The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* ran an unusually positive story about pro wrestling, and about the city's newest hometown hero, Kurt Angle, in particular. In one installment in a series of stories documenting how the U.S. has changed since the September 11 terrorist attacks, it focused on the Olympian's popularity and how he has come to symbolize the national spirit.

Staff Writer Monica L. Haynes went so far as to mention that Angle's push was occurring well before September 11, letting readers know the WWF wasn't capitalizing on the country's grief.

"America seems to need heroes now," Haynes wrote. "And it has found them—in firefighters, police officers, and airline passengers who gave their lives to foil hijackers.

"But it has also found one in a milk-chugging, flag-waving, broad-necked, muscular Yankee Doodle named Kurt Angle, a hometown hero who draped himself in the red, white, and blue long before the tragic events of September 11 made it the thing to do."

Haynes speculates the terrorist attacks might be part of the reason why people are flocking to Angle's book signings for his autobiography, *It's True! It's True!* Alongside parents and children in line are many current and ex-military personnel who respect the image Angle projects.

Regarding his WWF title victory over Steve Austin at Unforgiven, Angle noted, "I didn't want it to happen that way because of this tragedy."

Interestingly, Angle mentioned that at some airports, he wasn't even questioned about having a title belt in his bag. At others, he was stopped and frisked. Said Angle: "I hope the country gets so secure that nothing like that could ever happen again."

Ventura and Rivera ... Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura appeared on CNBC's *Rivera Live* to comment on the recent terrorist attacks. During his October 8 appearance, the former Navy SEAL discussed a recent tour he and his wife took of Ground Zero, where New York's World Trade Center towers once stood.

"It's like nothing I've seen before," stated Ventura. "It tore our hearts out. There are the remains of over 5,000 of our countrymen there now, and I consider it a sacred burial place. If anybody suggested this could happen a couple of months ago, they would have been locked up and told they were crazy."

Ventura noted his mission to New York was an official visit on behalf of Minnesota. He presented city officials with 10,000 cards of condolence, signed by a total of 40,000 Minnesotans.

Referring to his ongoing feud with the local Minnesota press, Ventura said reporters from his home state were denied access to Ground Zero and, as a result, took their frustrations out on him by criticizing his intentions.

"They'll never love you, but we do," said host Geraldo Rivera, trying to console Ventura.

"It doesn't bother me, Geraldo," responded Ventura. "Remember, I'm not a politician. I'm a statesman."

You had to know it wouldn't be long before Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura got to air his opinions on the terrorist attacks in a national forum. He appeared on *Rivera Live* after visiting Ground Zero in New York City.

WWFE Stockwatch

(For the period of September 1-30)

30-Day High: 13.20 on September 28
30-Day Low: 10.31 on September 17
52-Week High: 22.00 on January 31, 2001
52-Week Low: 10.31 on September 17, 2001

The New York Stock Exchange and all other American-based exchanges were closed for four days following the September 11 terrorist attacks—the longest period in U.S. history. When the NYSE did open on September 17, nothing could stem the greatest percentage drop since the Great Depression.

Media and cable companies were hard hit, especially when Credit Suisse First Boston downgraded 11 such corporations to a "hold" rating. While the idea of "holding" a stock might sound good, it's actually a kind way for investments firms to say "sell it." WWFE joined Walt Disney, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, USA Networks, and Viacom on the list.

"I would say in both cases [media and cable], we are more cautious than market consensus," First Boston analyst Laura Martin told CBS MarketWatch. "We're making the assumption that the prices haven't adjusted enough."

In other words, WWFE and other companies still haven't felt the real fallout from the September 11 event. CSFB expects those stocks to drop even further. WWFE stock, for example, fell to a 52-week low in September.

On another front, WWFE elected seven members to its board of directors. They are Chairman Vince McMahon, CEO Linda McMahon, Connecticut Governor Lowell Weicker, COO Stuart Snyder, David Kenin, Joseph Perkins, and August J. Liguori.

TV breakdown

Week beginning September 3

Raw (TNN): 4.6

Analysis: In one of the best-orchestrated heel turns ever, Christian attacked long-time partner Edge, the Intercontinental champ, with the King of the Ring trophy and delivered a devastating one-man *con-chair-to.* And while Vince McMahon touts *Raw* as an action-adventure series, the show became too close to one when Kurt Angle threatened to push WWF World champion Steve Austin off a bridge and into a river.

Smackdown (UPN): 3.4

Analysis: It's safe to say this *Smackdown* won't be remembered for Brian Adams and Bryan Clark bursting onto the scene and attacking The Undertaker. It will be remembered, however, as the beginning of Rob Van Dam's awesome push to superstardom. Seemingly out of nowhere, he challenged and defeated fellow Alliance member WWF champion Steve Austin in a non-title match.

Excess (TNN): 0.8

Sunday Night Heat (MTV): 1.3

Week beginning September 10

Raw (TNN): 4.7

Analysis: The interplay among WWF champion Steve Austin, Kurt Angle, and Rob Van Dam became more complicated following Angle's hardcore title victory over Van Dam. Austin attacked Angle from behind on the rampway and threw him 20 feet to the arena floor, then recklessly tossed Van Dam on top of him, enabling RVD to regain the belt. Raw did well considering *Monday Night Football's* season premiere aired on ABC.

Smackdown (UPN): 3.6

Analysis: This was the most difficult WWF telecast since the death of Owen Hart. The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., had occurred two days earlier, so the WWF couldn't tape the show on Tuesday night. Instead, it aired live on Thursday. Vince McMahon opened the program with a rousing speech about America, and wrestlers voiced their opinions in pretaped interviews throughout the show. Bradshaw's passionate display was the most memorable.

Excess (TNN): 0.7

Sunday Night Heat (MTV): Pre-empted due to terrorist attacks

Week beginning September 17

Raw (TNN): 4.8

Analysis: Appropriately, the WWF cloaked *Raw* in red, white, and blue, and there was even a waving flag on the TitanTron throughout the program. Oddly, Lilian Garcia conveniently omitted Lance Storm's home country from her ring announcements. Was it done because Storm's character was somewhat anti-American at that point, or was it an innocent omission? Also, The Dudley Boyz won the WWF tag belts from The Undertaker and Kane.

Smackdown (UPN): 3.9

Analysis: *Smackdown* scored a relatively high 3.9 this week, but the true test will come when *Survivor III* debuts on CBS. WWF World champion Steve Austin escalated the violence in his feud with Kurt Angle by piledriving the Olympian on the concrete floor. In addition, Edge returned to action for the first time since Christian turned against him. Rob Van Dam and WCW World champion The Rock continued to receive huge ovations.

Excess (TNN): 0.8

Sunday Night Heat (MTV): 1.4

Week beginning September 24

Raw (TNN): 4.5

Analysis: *Raw* didn't experience the usual boost after a WWF pay-per-view. Although Kurt Angle's WWF title victory over Steve Austin at Unforgiven matched the mood of America, *Raw* dropped slightly this week to 4.5. In a superb doubleheader, Angle retained his belt against Booker T, and WCW champion The Rock defended against Rob Van Dam.

Smackdown (UPN): 3.9

Analysis: Holy double-cross, Batman! Molly Holly left behind her old boyfriend, Spike Dudley, and jumped on the Hurri-cycle to help The Hurricane fight evildoers. Shane McMahon helped Booker T and Test defeat The Undertaker and Kane for the WCW World tag team title. *Smackdown* scored 3.9 for the second consecutive week despite the absence of Steve Austin. Rob Van Dam was more than happy to fill Austin's spot, however.

Excess (TNN): 0.7

Sunday Night Heat (MTV): 1.4

THE Wrestling ANALYST

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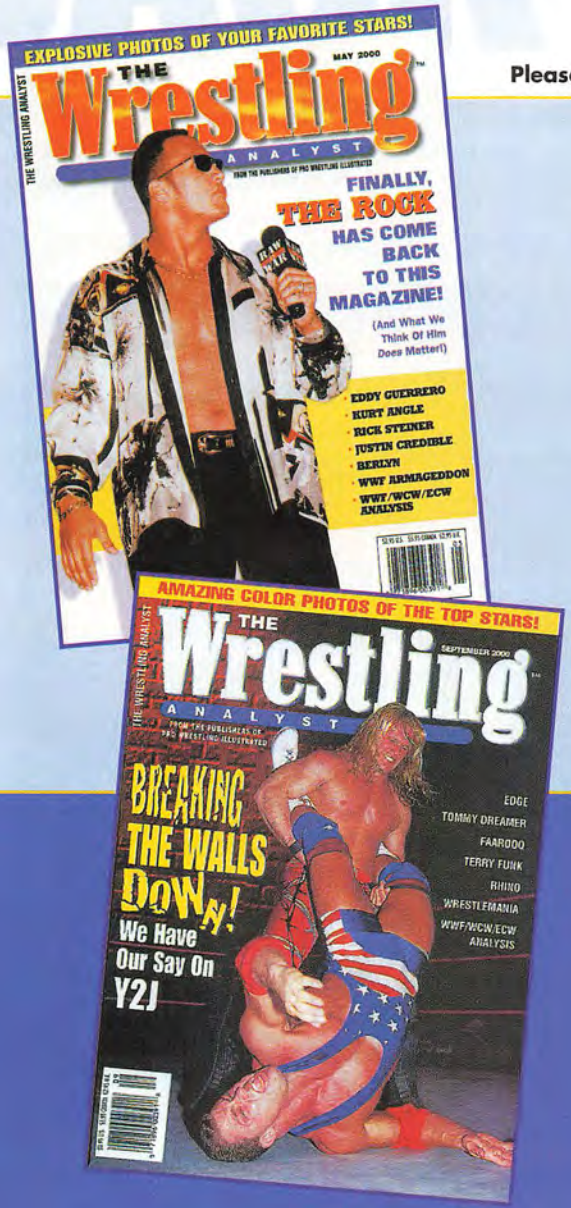

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- ☐ **March 2000:** Chyna, Sid Vicious, Steve Blackman, Yoshihiro Tajiri, Barry Windham, Unforgiven, WWF-WCW-ECW.
- ☐ **May 2000:** The Rock, Eddie Guerrero, Kurt Angle, Rick Steiner, Justin Credible, Berlyn, Armageddon, WWF-WCW-ECW.
- ☐ **July 2000:** Rikishi, Test, Madusa, Mike Awesome, Meng, Albert, Royal Rumble, WWF-WCW-ECW.
- ☐ **Sept. 2000:** Chris Jericho, Edge, Tommy Dreamer, Terry Funk, Rhino, WrestleMania, WWF-WCW-ECW.

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the steel cage

By Dave Rosenbaum

SHORT IS SWEET. Even though we're approaching the dead of winter, it's time for me to do some spring cleaning. I have dust collecting on my brain, and most of it is comprised of dead flecks of skin that have fallen off what the WWF likes to call its superstars. So despite that fact that there's a "State Of The Stars" on page 44 of this very issue, I'm going to do my own personal evaluation of the sport's biggest names. (In a tribute to Larry King, who recently wrote his last column for the bastion of abbreviated journalism, *USA Today,* I'm going follow his famous but much-maligned dot-dot-dot format.)

Let's start from the top.

"Stone-Cold" Steve Austin used to be the world's toughest wrestler. Now he's not even the WWF's toughest redneck. Fellow Texan **Bradshaw** now holds that title ... **The Rock** has been a proud WCW World champion, but I'd prefer to see **Ric Flair**, **Sting**, or even **Ernest "The Cat" Miller** wearing that strap. Why? Well, even someone as cynical as I am has a respect for the sport's history. How can a WWF wrestler hold the WCW title? For that matter, how can Austin, an Alliance wrestler, be the WWF World champion? There's been way too much trading of titles between the promotions for my liking ... **Kurt Angle's** defeat of Austin for the WWF title 12 days after the terrorist attacks bothered me. The win stunk way too much of trying to capitalize on a national tragedy, even if that wasn't the case. Angle's autobiography, however, makes for a

Everyone started noticing that Booker T was looking a little too much like The Rock when he first won the WCW title last July (above). Booker does play a Rock wannabe well; Dave Rosenbaum, however, believes Juventud Guerrera as The Juice (right) is a more appropriate choice for that role.

The few matches between Torrie Wilson and Trish Stratus weren't not too memorable, but Torrie could be the worst wrestler in the history of the world and she'd probably still have a decent fan base. Same goes for Stacy Keibler.

good read—if you enjoy boredom-induced naps ... When is **The Undertaker** going to shelve his way-too-dangerous last ride power bomb finisher? ... When is **Kane** going to lose his mask? ... The popularity of **The Hardy Boyz** and **Lita** has started to wane just a bit. A breakup and feud would only serve as a short-term solution, however ... I'm still stifled by **Booker T's** mission to turn himself into **The Book**. The WWF already has a Rock. And if it wants a truly great Rock impersonator, federation officials should bring in **Juventud Guerrera**, who was hilarious as **The Juice** in the Time Warner-owned WCW before he went nutzo in Australia. Booker's way too talented to waste on such an obviously weak gimmick ... Speaking of weak gimmicks, **"Diamond" Dallas Page** had better be thankful that men like looking at bent-over women. That skit in early-October positively saved DDP's career. It was one of the funniest things I've seen on *Raw* in a long time ... I'd like to thank **Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley** for renewing my interest in geography. I can't stare at her globes often enough these days ... Good to see **Chris Jericho** finally developing some backbone. Y2J was so stale for so long, I had begun watching tapes of his days in WCW just to remind myself how talented he actually is. (**Stinko Malenko** and **Ralphus** still deliver.) ... Why the sudden push for **Test**? And why does good ol' **Jim Ross** seem intent on driving home the point that he's one of the Alliance's most talented wrestlers when he still hasn't accomplished that much? Is it because he's stopped drinking **Paul Heyman's** Kool-Aid and starting downing **Shane McMahon's** special blend? ... Fact: **Torrie Wilson** and **Stacy Keibler** don't have much in-ring talent. Observation: No one really minds or cares. At least no guys ... Congratulations go out to **Christian**, who has done what I once thought would be impossible: He's come up with a ring entrance/intro that's even worse than **X-Pac's** ... It's easy to see why **Mighty Molly** dumped **Spike Dudley** for **The Hurricane**. Lil' Spike's adulation of **The Big Show** has gone a bit too far, as seen by Spike's willingness to wear a smaller replica of Show's singlet. It sure doesn't make you think, *Now there goes a great athlete* ... Of course, **Buh Buh Ray Dudley** and, to a lesser extent, **D-Von Dudley** don't always make us think that, either ... Pop quiz: Can you name the WCW star currently on WWF TV who has taken the biggest nosedive since the WWF bought the promotion? I'll go with **Lance Storm**. He's gone from serious contender to the WCW World title to sidekick for The Hurricane. *Hmmmmmm*. A storm a sidekick for a hurricane? Maybe it's not so farfetched after all ... Believe it or not, **Tommy Dreamer** is still on the payroll. Now if only WWF fans would ever get a chance to see what this guy can do. □

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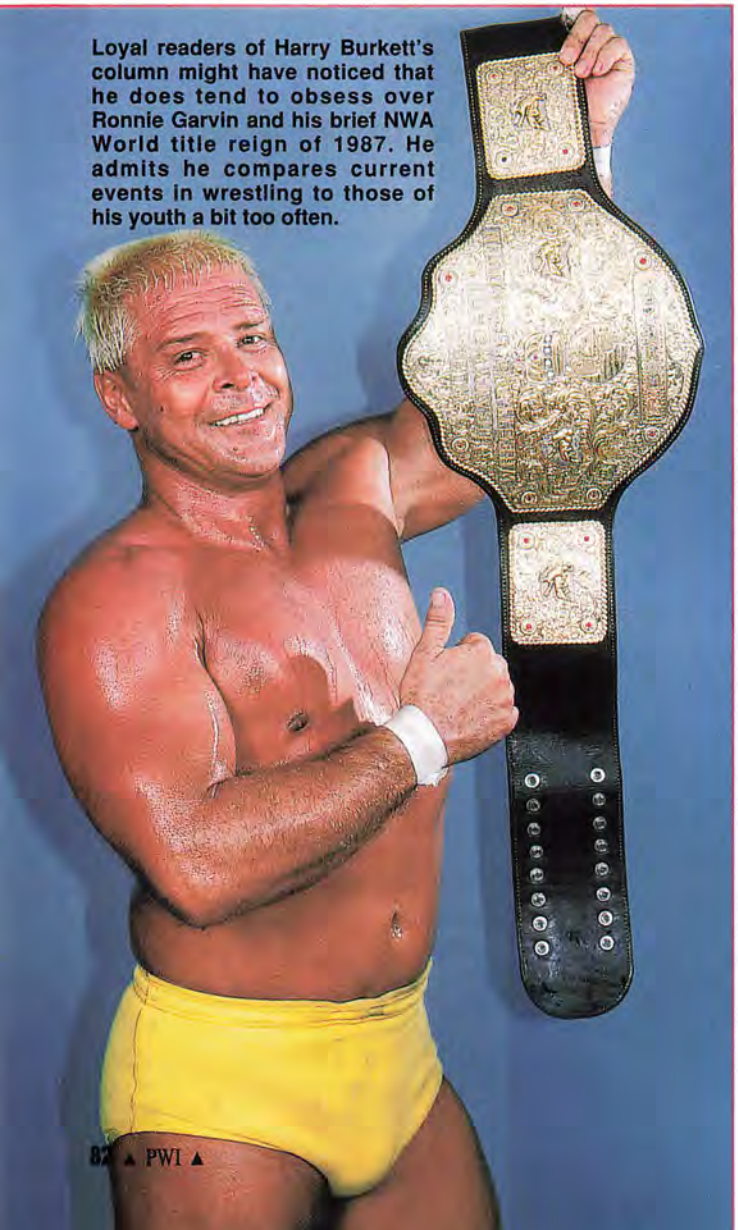
win lose or draw

By Harry Burkett



Loyal readers of Harry Burkett's column might have noticed that he does tend to obsess over Ronnie Garvin and his brief NWA World title reign of 1987. He admits he compares current events in wrestling to those of his youth a bit too often.

THE CYCLONIC PULL caused me to whirl along the outer edges of present-day reality. I went around and around initially and was then pulled concentrically inward, as if going around a track that constricted further with each succeeding lap. The great suction pulled me downward as the circular laps became faster, tighter. The inward and downward forces combined to pull me out of this dimension and into a twilight consciousness. I was familiar with this new, previous reality. It was a time and place I had experienced before, but never with as much appreciation and devotion.

Just to think all that happened during a recent phone call with Dave Lenker.

Actually, it's been happening to me a lot lately. It happens when I try to engage in a conversation about the current state of wrestling. For example, Dave and I were discussing the most recent edition of *Raw* and how it could relate to my next "Win, Lose, Or Draw" column. Here's an excerpt:

BURKETT: Maybe I spend too much time concentrating on *Excess* and *Heat* and not enough time watching *Raw* and *Smackdown.* That could be my problem.

LENKER: No, no, we've always appreciated the fact you watch the secondary shows so closely. I mean, toward the end, you watched *Thunder* every week while everyone in the office tried to avoid it.

BURKETT: I know. I find amusement in mediocrity. It's more stimulating. *Raw* comes off as slick, clever, and perfect in its production, something that doesn't require much brain exertion. At least when I watched *Thunder,* I was screaming, my adrenaline was pumping, and, in my frustration, I would entertain myself by coming up with ways to improve the show. It was an interactive experience.

LENKER: What do you mean?

BURKETT: I wasn't watching *Thunder* just to watch *Thunder.* Consciously, or maybe subconsciously, I was comparing every aspect to *Raw* and *Smackdown.* And when I watched *Raw* and *Smackdown,* I was comparing every aspect to *Nitro* and *Thunder.* The side-by-side comparison comprised the bulk of the entertainment value.

LENKER: Your enjoyment of *Raw* was enhanced just because you knew you weren't watching *Nitro.*

BURKETT: Exactly.

LENKER: So what's your column topic gonna be?

BURKETT: *Hmmmmmm.* I think I'll write about the Kurt Angle-Steve Austin feud over the WWF title and how, as good as it is, it doesn't measure up to the Ric Flair-Ronnie Garvin feud over the NWA belt.

LENKER: I thought you hated Ronnie Garvin. Didn't you say he was the worst NWA champion ever?

BURKETT: Yeah. I just watched a SuperStation match between Flair and Garvin on tape, and, well, I think it's time to revisit Ronnie Garvin, historically speaking. You know, like all the historians are revisiting the Eisenhower administration and are finding out

It's probably not really fair to compare the 2001 feud between Kurt Angle and Steve Austin (or any current rivalry) to feuds of yesteryear. Wrestling has changed so much in just the last five years. It's best to judge such things on their own merits.

he was a better President than they thought.

(Suddenly, I felt myself going around and around, inward and downward, sucked down to a more familiar place. I visualize it as a time tunnel from an old science fiction movie, or that psychedelic scene from Vertigo in which Jimmy Stewart is slipping down a psychological spiral to madness. Or, I suppose it's like being flushed down a toilet.)

LENKER: Uh, yeah. So it's another nostalgia piece?

***(Another** nostalgia piece?! I snapped out of my happy delirium. I realized how Dave, Stu, and everyone else must think I'm stuck in the '80s. Quickly, I tuck away the crack pipe of time past, attempting to hide my addiction to things that are no more.)*

LENKER: Harry, are you there?

BURKETT: I think I've changed my mind. I'd like to come up with something a bit more topical. I get so bored talking about things that are *so* yesterday.

LENKER: Just call me back and let me know.

At that moment, I realized why they discontinued Matt Brock's column in *The Wrestler* and haven't brought him back to *PWI*. I have become Matt Brock! There's no need to resurrect ol' Matt's "Looking Back" column. You're reading it! It's now called "Win, Lose, Or Draw"!

Fortunately, Stu Saks isn't stuck in the '70s. Bruno Sammartino, Pedro Morales, and Paul Jones haven't been mentioned prominently in his column for decades. Lately, odds are good that I'll mention Roddy Piper, Bob Backlund, or Jack Brisco—my '80s wrestling heroes—in mine.

Even if I intend to discuss Kurt Angle, The Rock, Steve Austin, or specific events in today's WWF, I end up dwelling on Ric Flair, Dusty Rhodes, Ronnie Garvin, and how they affected the NWA nearly a generation ago.

Dave is right. I did hate Ronnie Garvin. I hated the fact that he was over 40 years old and wearing a spiky haircut with the little rat tail at the end. I hated the way he used to embarrass Ric Flair. I hated the way he had to jump in the air to hit someone in the nose. I hated that silly hands of stone finisher in which he would just haul off and knock somebody out with one punch. Why were 10 punches from Sting needed to cause Flair to fall on his nose when it only took one punch from Garvin to knock him out?

And why do I think he was the worst NWA World champion ever? That's because the NWA waived the rule requiring the champion to defend the title at least once every 30 days and granted Garvin a special extension to 40 days until his rematch against Flair at Starrcade '87.

Why couldn't the NWA have just given Garvin the opportunity to squash Black Bart sometime within the initial 30 days? After all, Garvin wouldn't lose the title in such a match. Black Bart was never going to be NWA World champion and everyone knew it.

I've done it again. I understand now why old people so easily slip into rose-colored renditions of how life used to be. The past is more enjoyable because you've already lived through it, which makes everything so much easier to understand. Dealing with the present is more difficult, and usually, only younger people have the energy and inclination to try.

For me, the fun of wrestling has been to compare different promotions, different eras, and different ways of doing things. Now that the WWF is the undisputed leader in the industry, I should analyze and appreciate the federation on its own merits instead of comparing it against the ghosts of promotions past.

Besides, I like Kurt Angle a lot more than I liked Ronnie Garvin. □

the straight shooter

By Dan Murphy

Hercules Hernandez almost looks like a monster in this photo with Jim Cornette, but take away the blood and the scary face and he is just a human being. Dan Murphy began to lose some of his "wrestling innocence" when, as a kid, he saw Hercules outside an arena.

I LOVED MAGIC when I was a kid.

Back in the late-1970s, I used to look forward to the ultra-hokey Doug Henning magic specials that would come on TV a few times a year. I remember getting seriously freaked out when David Copperfield prepared to walk through the Great Wall of China and claimed that if he was unable to pull it off, his molecules would become fused with the wall, leaving him trapped there for eternity.

Did I believe any of it? Maybe a tiny bit, but that was only because I allowed myself to. Magic was the art of creating an optical illusion, working that desire that exists deep inside all of us—the desire to believe in the unknown. The desire to believe in supermen who could disappear at will, walk through a solid stone wall, or conjure fantastic animals and seemingly control the elements.

I guess I outgrew my magic phase. I put on a few magic shows for my parents and grandmothers, carefully avoiding all the card tricks I hadn't quite mastered. I learned that illusion can sometimes be just a false bottom to a plastic cup or a little bit of tape rolled up inside a handkerchief.

Every once in a while, I still find myself stopping to watch a magic special on TV. Sometimes I get into it, but usually I don't. I just can't capture the same simple belief in the unbelievable that I could 20 years ago. I wonder how many seven-year-old kids watch David Copperfield pull off his latest feat and let their imaginations run away. Do kids today still believe in magic?

Here we are, nearly 300 words into this edition of "The Straight Shooter," and I still haven't mentioned wrestling. That is, unless you substitute the word "wrestling" for magic in the previous paragraphs.

When I was a kid, I lusted after a chance to go behind the curtain at Buffalo's Memorial Auditorium and meet the wrestlers. My friends and I would beg our parents to take us to the arena hours before the show just so we'd stand a chance of catching a glimpse of a wrestler getting out of his

rental car and dashing through the side door of the arena. I remember seeing Hercules Hernandez show up once wearing blue jeans, a tank top, and a fanny pack and being genuinely surprised that he didn't always wear his brown fur vest and carry his chain.

He looked like—like just another guy trying to find the right door so he could get ready to go to work.

Today, as a wrestling journalist, I get to go behind the curtain all the time. Someday I'll tell you the story about how I accidentally opened a door into Rick Steiner, who then fell back into Scott Steiner, who then fell down a couple of stairs. (For the record, Rick was trying to pull a door that clearly said "push" on it.)

Want to know what The Honky Ton Man's been doing? Want to hear everything about his historic Intercontinental title win 14 years ago? He'll tell you on his Web site. Other wrestlers offer similar types of comments on their sites, which makes The Murph think we have too much access to insider information.

I've been behind the curtain, and I think Matt Brock says it best: "I've never had a wrestler want to come and see where I write my columns. They read the end results, and I watch their matches in the ring, and that's how it should be."

Wrestling, like magic, is most exciting when you don't know too much. It used to be hardly *anyone* went behind the curtain. Today, the wrestlers can't pull the curtain out of the way fast enough. I can't even begin to count the number of books written by wrestlers in the past four years. Mick Foley, Chyna, Goldberg, The Rock, Kurt Angle, Dynamite Kid, Kurt Angle, Dallas Page—all telling us their version of what things are "really like" backstage. Even B. Brian Blair has a book out on how to *talk* like a wrestler. The irony is that wrestlers used to talk in their own special language so fans wouldn't catch on to what they were really saying to each other. Now you'll hear half of those terms and expressions (though usually spoken in the wrong context) at the next wrestling card you attend.

Wrestlers hawk videotapes on which they mouth off on a bunch of subjects and harp about how they've been held down by promoters or how badly they want to beat on other wrestlers.

The Internet has made it even worse. I'm not even talking about fan sites, or newsboards that purport to be your "exclusive" source for the latest wrestling news. I'm talking about the official Web sites of some of the wrestlers. You want to know all the inside dirt about how The Honky Tonk Man won the WWF Intercontinental title in 1987 (at least, HTM's version of it)? Go to his Web site. Want to know the latest in Jerry Lawler's love life? His Web site will give you know everything you need to know and probably more. Remember how Tammy "Sunny" Sytch used her Slammy Award-winning buns to help The Bodydonnas win the WWF tag title? You can see more than those buns online.

There's just too much information out there these days. Whether we like it or not, we're all behind the curtain now. Wrestlers slip into and out of and back into character before our eyes. And it's taken a lot of the magic out of wrestling.

Do kids today still watch wrestling? Of course they do. Millions of them. But not the way I did. Not the way the entire staff of this magazine did. Many of them watch it for high spots, promos, and T & A, not the sweet science of move to countermove or the slow unfolding of a long feud. There are very few mysteries left. Does anyone remember how shocking it was to see Miss Elizabeth strip down to a very revealing bathing suit at SummerSlam 1988? Today she'd likely be a *Playboy* centerfold or a pay-per-view Web site attraction.

Wrestling fans have lost their innocence. And I don't think that's a good thing. A good magician never gives away the secret behind his illusions. Why is it that so many good wrestlers can't give away their secrets fast enough? □

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(Continued from page 13)

Even though the first season of *Tough Enough* is now over, for **Maven Huffman** and **Nidia Guenard**, the inaugural *Tough Enough* champions, the hard part is just beginning; They're both headed off to WWF developmental territories to further their training. Maven will be spending time in the Heartland Wrestling Association, and Nidia will spar with former ECW wrestler **Jazz**, former **Godfather** ho **Victoria**, and former WCW *Nitro* Girl/valet **Sharmel Sullivan (Paisley)** in OVW. Despite the fact that **Al Snow**, **Tazz**, **Jacquelyn**, and **Tori** believe they paid their dues during *Tough Enough*, both Maven and Nidia can expect to work even harder now that they're under WWF developmental contracts. They better work hard, too, or at least some of the wrestlers they'll be working with will resent them more than they already do—and believe me, the resentment is there.

Interestingly enough, the WWF is keeping its options open in regard to the three *Tough Enough* finalists who didn't win the competition—**Josh Lomberger**, **Chris Nowinski**, and **Taylor Matheny**. I'd like to see the WWF give these three a shot, too, if only to watch WWF veterans like **The Acolytes** take "Harvard Chris" down a notch or two.

"Wildcat" Chris Harris and **Prince Justice** have formed a team in the Northern Wrestling Federation. NWF officials think the team will be a strong one ... Top Rope Championship Wrestling stars **Rob Stardom**, **Ryan Wood**, and **Pete Moss** were involved in an auto accident just outside Kenora, Ontario. All three men were taken to the hospital but only suffered minor injuries ... **April Hunter**, fitness model and former NWO beauty, continues to work the indy circuit, helping **Slyk Wagner Brown** achieve a few underhanded wins. One of the pair's latest victims was former WCW star **Crowbar**. Don't be surprised if the two of them get involved in a feud with **Simon Diamond** and **Dawn Marie** in the ECWA.

That does it for me this month, fans. Enjoy your wanderings. □

WCW fans might remember the lovely April Hunter from her very brief stint with the NWO a few years ago. She and partner Slyk Wagner Brown are causing trouble in the indies now. The ECWA in Delaware was one of their recent stops.

this month in...

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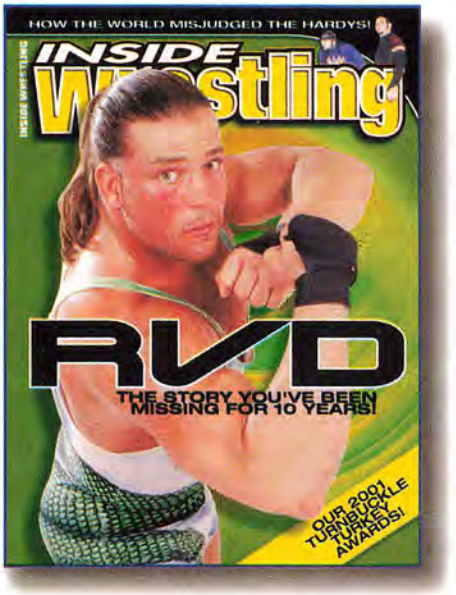
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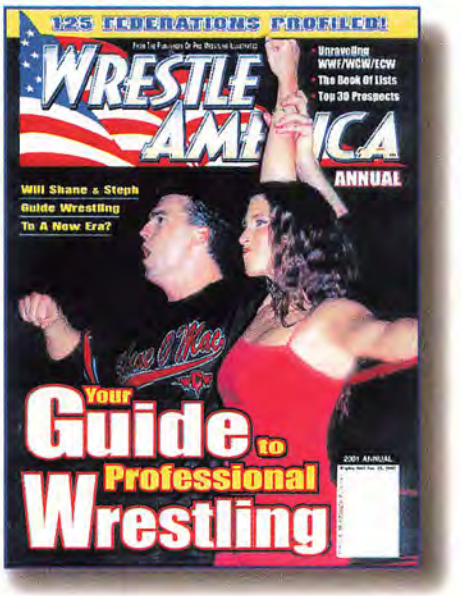

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May 1979: Paul Jones-Rick Steamboat Feud: Who Is Really To Blame? Also: Valiants, Jack Brisco, Larry Hennig, Johnson-King, Lanza-Mulligan, Chief Jay Strongbow, Snuka-Patera.

July 1979: Ernie Ladd's Claim: "Mr. Wrestling II Uses A Loaded Mask!" Also: Backlund-Race, Andre-Baker, Bruno Sammartino, Nick Bockwinkel, Dick Slater, Sonny King, Valiants, Stan Hansen.

Sept. 1979: A New—And Deadly—Feud For Rick Steamboat. Also: Roddy Piper, Superstar Graham, Backlund-Brower, Cyclone Negro, Greg Gagne, The Bruiser-Brody, Dino Bravo, Mil Mascaras, Hussein Arab.

Dec. 1979: Is Andre Ready To Quit Wrestling? Also: Harley Race-El Halcon, Superstar Graham, Steve Keirn, Volkoff-Bruno, Sheik-Mascaras, Igor-Lewin, Dusty Rhodes, Putski-Brower.

April 1980: Did Ken Patera Destroy Dusty Rhodes' Bionic Elbow? Also: Terry Funk, Kevin Von Erich, DiBiase-Backlund, Bockwinkel & Heenan, Baba-Race, Mr. Wrestling II, Youngblood & Steamboat.

Aug. 1980: The Reign Of Bloodshed Begins: Stevens & Valentine Win The NWA Tag Team Title! Also: Kerry Von Erich, Backlund & Skaaland, Nick Bockwinkel, Zbyszko-Bruno, Keirn-Muraco, Samoans, Wrestling II-Idol.

June 1981: Bruno Sammartino: "I Want To Break Stan Hansen's Neck!" Also: Ted DiBiase, Garea & Martel, Mike Graham, Mongolian Stomper, Piper-Superstar, Verne Gagne, Tommy Rich.

Sept. 1980: Why Ernie Ladd Says .... "I'm Tired Of Being Your King." Also: Rick Steamboat, Mad Dog Vachon, Bugsy McGraw, Patera-Patterson, Manny Fernandez, Bob Backlund, Greg Gagne, Mike Sharpe.

Oct. 1980: Kevin Von Erich Wins The Missouri Title From Kevin Von Erich! Also: Mr. Wrestling II, Pedro Morales, Superstar Graham, Dusty Rhodes, Idol-Race, Rick McGraw.

Feb. 1981: Larry Zbyszko's Claim: "Tony Garea Begged Me Not To Hurt Him!" Also: The Grappler, Race-Patera, Hussein Arab, Humperdink-Rhodes, Gilberts, Mr. Wrestling II, Bravo-Bockwinkel.

Oct. 1981: Is The Funk Family At War? Why Terry Funk And Dory Funk Jr. Were Forced To Wrestle. Also: Backlund-Patterson-Mosca, Harley Race, Rhodes-Khan, Kevin Sullivan, Flair-Patera, Verne Gagne.

Jan. 1982: Rich vs. Masked Superstar: Can Tommy Rich Survive As Georgia's Last Hero? Also: Kiwis, Bockwinkel-Atlas, Mascaras-Steamboat, Sullivan-Taylor, Bruno Sammartino.

March 1982: U.S. Champion Slaughter vs. Former NWA Champion Race: How Harley Race's Attempt To Win An "Easy" Title Ended In Disaster. Also: Jimmy Snuka, Flair-Idol, Steve Keirn, Steamboat-Patterson, Fuji-Albano-Saito, Bruno Sammartino Jr., Bruiser-Sullivan.

Aug. 1982: Nick Bockwinkel: "Tommy Rich Is Too Stupid To Be Champion!" Also: Putski-Adonis, Blackjack Mulligan Jr., Roddy Piper, Rick Steamboat, Lawler-Kaufman, Mike Graham.

April 1982: How Jack Brisco Controls Ric Flair's Championship Destiny. Also: Tito Santana, Valentine-Atlas, Bob Roop, Armstrongs, John Studd, Eric Embry.

June 1982: Ric Flair vs. Rick Steamboat: How The NWA Belt Strangled Wrestling's Greatest Friendship. Also: Piper-Armstrong, Hussein Arab, Bruno Sammartino, Adonis & Ventura, Butch Reed.

July 1982: Harley Race—His Destiny Is In The Hands Of Tommy Rich. Also: Rick Steamboat, Chief Jay Strongbow, Buzz Sawyer, Ric Flair, Roddy Piper.

Sept. 1982: Dusty Rhodes Returns To Florida: The Tragic Comeback That Should Not Have Happened. Also: Manny Fernandez, Armstrong-Piper, Blassie-Mulligan, Japan, Bockwinkel-Hogan.

Dec. 1982: Morales vs. Snuka: Does Pedro Deserve To Be Intercontinental Champion? Also: Bob Orton Jr., Kamala, Rich & Rhodes, Barry Windham, Ted DiBiase, JYD-Bockwinkel, Oliver Humperdink.

Jan. 1983: Ivan Putski Humiliates Cowboy Bob Orton: Can The Grand Wizard Pick Up The Pieces? Also: Barry Windham, Muraco-Sawyer-Rich, Nick Bockwinkel, Flair-Youngblood-Steamboat, Fabulous Kangaroos.

Feb. 1983: Exclusive Coverage: Nick Bockwinkel Regains The AWA Title From Otto Wanz. Also: Backlund-Graham, Rich-Sawyer, Barry Windham, Martel & Garea, McDaniel & Piper, Kamala.

May 1983: What Will Happen When The Samoans Become Too Smart For Capt. Lou Albano? Also: Tommy Rich, Terry Allen, Eddie Gilbert, Kerry-Race, Ladd & Rhodes, Flair-Orndorff.

June 1983: Flair-Windham Match Spurs Controversy: Should The NWA Champion Be Allowed To Choose His Challengers? Also: Ivan Koloff, Bruiser Brody, Kerry Von Erich, Andre-Kamala, Brazil-Valentine, Gagnes-Martel.

July 1983: Ric Flair: "I Wrestle The Men Backlund Is Afraid Of." Also: Putski-Adonis, Kevin Sullivan, Bob Roop, Martel-Heenan.

Sept. 1983: Nick Bockwinkel Forces Hulk Hogan Into Exile: And Only The Fans Can Bring Him Back. Also: Briscos, Blackwell-Kerry-Race, Paul Ellering, Mulligan & Windham.

Nov. 1983: Target—Harley Race! Can Dusty Rhodes Fulfill His American Dream A Third Time? Also: Rick Rude, Rotundo-Kabuki, Gagne & Brunzell, Tito Santana, Von Erichs-Freebirds.

Dec. 1983: The Night The AWA World Title Was Stolen From Mil Mascaras. Also: Roddy Piper, Larry Zbyszko, Dino Bravo, Fabulous Ones, Garvin & Sunshine.

March 1984: Is Tito Santana Trying To Blackmail The WWF? Also: Wayne & Sawyer, Hogan-Race, David Von Erich, Jesse Ventura.

June 1984: David Von Erich—We'll Never Forget You. Also: Billy Jack, Flair-Race, Bockwinkel-Bravo, Brickhouse Brown.

July 1984: Tommy Rich Is Back! And He Owes It All To The Fans. Also: Valiant-Rhodes, Ric Flair, Mike Von Erich, Billy Jack.

Aug. 1984: Garvin vs. Roberts: "Hands Of Stone" Crushes "The Snake." Also: Freebirds-Devastation Inc., Sawyer-Sullivan, Lawler & Dillon, McDaniel-Race.

Sept. 1984: Kerry Von Erich Wins The NWA World Title: For David ... For Texas ... For Wrestling! Also: Road Warriors-Bundy & Superstar, Johnson & Atlas-Piper & Orndorff, Billy Jack-Sawyer.

Nov. 1984: The $50,000 Full-Nelson Challenge Match: Billy Jack Gets Revenge Against Superstar Graham. Also: Piper-Hogan, Heenan & Saito, Brody & Hansen, Von Erichs.

Dec. 1984: The Tully Blanchard-Rick Steamboat Feud: Will Dusty Rhodes End It ... Or Make It Worse? Also: Tito Santana, Martel-Atlas, D. Funk, Mike Von Erich, Williams-Taylor.

Jan. 1985: Kerry Von Erich: "I've Got Ric Flair's NWA Title Within My Grasp." Also: Albano & Lauper, Koloffs & Kernodle, Road Warriors, Lawler & Rude, Scott McGhee.

Feb. 1985: Greg Valentine Wins Tito Santana's Intercontinental Title ... But Does He Deserve To Be Champion? Also: Ronnie Garvin, Warriors-Sheepherders, Flair-Billy Jack, Nikita Koloff.

April 1985: Six-Man Riot! Road Warriors & Ellering vs. Rhodes, Rich, & Anderson. Also: Tonga Kid, tomorrow's stars, Adams-Kevin, Flair-Jack, Terminators.

June 1985: Are The WWF Rulebreakers Singling Out Barry Windham For Destruction? Also: Zbyszko-Backlund, Rhodes-Blanchard, Tommy Rich, Oliver-Haynes.

July 1985: It's A Dog's Life ... And Junkyard Dog Wouldn't Trade It With Anyone! Also: Backlund-Martel, Kernodle-Koloff, Butch Reed, Hernandez & Sunshine, Mike Graham.

Aug. 1985: Ten Days Of Blood And Glory: The Road Warriors Invade Japan! Also: Terry Taylor, Magnum T.A., Bugsy McGraw, Sheik & Volkoff-Windham & Rotundo, 20th anniversary.

Oct. 1985: David Shultz Gets An NWA Title Shot: Ric Flair—"I Wrestle The Men Hulk Hogan Is Afraid Of!" Also: Misty Blue, Rick Martel, Kendall Windham, George Steele, Killer Brooks, wrestling greats' all-time top 10.

June 1986: Kerry Reveals His Secret: "I've Told Magnum T.A. How To Beat Ric Flair!" Also: Steve Williams, Hogan-Orton, Flair-Bockwinkel, Lex Luger.

Nov. 1986: Morton & Gibson Take A Trip To Badstreet U.S.A.: The Rock 'n' Roll Express vs. The Freebirds. Also: Eddie Gilbert, Hogan-Orndorff, Mike Von Erich, Mulligan-Bass.

Dec. 1986: Ric Flair's NWA Title Reign: Last Chance To Silence The Critics! Also: Nikita Koloff, Gilbert & Sting, Hogan-Piper, Abdullah-Adams, Nick Bockwinkel.

Jan. 1987: Bobby Heenan's Bitter Crusade To Destroy Hulk Hogan. Also: Borne & Sawyer, Garvins, Ted DiBiase, Misty Blue Simmes.

Feb. 1987: Tragedy Strikes Wrestling: Magnum T.A. Needs Your Prayers Now More Than Ever. Also: Roberts-Steamboat, Crusher Yurkof, Terry Gordy, Wendell Cooley.

March 1987: Ivan & Khrushchev's Kremlin Orders: Crush Nikita Koloff's Russian Revolution! Also: Barry Windham, One Man Gang, Brian Adias, Savage-Steamboat, Jimmy Snuka.

June 1987: The Hart Foundation vs. The Can-Ams: Special Analysis Of This WWF Superfeud! Also: Nick Bockwinkel, Paul Orndorff, Rhodes & Murdoch, Steve Williams.

July 1987: Missy Hyatt: Will She Kiss And Tell In The WWF? Also: Chris Adams, Hart Foundation, Luger & Horsemen, Nikita-Cornette, Stan Hansen.

Sept. 1987: Independence Day! Also: Hennig-Bockwinkel, Hart Foundation, Koloffs, Bubba Rogers, Missy Hyatt.

Oct. 1987: The Honky Tonk Man Wins The Intercontinental Title: Is Randy Savage The Fans' Last Hope. Also: Kerry Von Erich, Ken Patera, Sting-Gilbert, Horsemen-Freebirds, Zbyszko-Gagne.

Dec. 1987: Hulk Hogan: Will He Be Drowned By The New Wave Of Challengers? Also: Hennig-Lawler, Windham-Steiner, Flair-Williams, Brutus Beefcake, Ronnie Garvin.

Jan. 1988: The Experts Agree: The Road Warriors Will Turn Bad In 1988! Also: Koloff-Taylor, Curt Hennig, Duggan-DiBiase.

Feb. 1988: Ric Flair Admits: "I'm Nothing Without The NWA Belt!" Also: Kerry Von Erich, Jim Cornette, Hogan-Andre, Hennig-Lawler, Terry Taylor.

March 1988: After Four Years As Champion ... Only Hulk Hogan Can Beat Hulk Hogan. Also: Warriors-Demolition, Steve Williams, Luger & Dillon, Calgary, Terry Gordy.

April 1988 (Special Issue): Starrcade, Survivor Series, World Class: Wrestling's Greatest Day! Also: Midnight Rockers, Luger-Horsemen, Santana & Martel, McDaniel-Hennig, Bobby Eaton.

May 1988: Belt Or No Belt ... Hulk Hogan Is Still The People's Champion! Also: Madusa Micelli, Owen Hart-Flair, Tatum & Victory, Scott Hall, Luger-Anderson.

June 1988: How Sting's War With Ric Flair Could Make Him A Horseman! Also: Bobby Heenan, Martel-Zenk, Kerry-Gordy, Ted DiBiase, Nikita Koloff.

Aug. 1988: World Tag Title Power Shift! Also: Windham & Luger, Demolition, Taylor-Freebirds, Paul Ellering, Owen & Bret.

Oct. 1988: The Fantastics Declare: "We Will Not Share Our Fans With The Rock 'n' Roll Express!" Also: Rhodes-Windham, Curt Hennig, Roberts-Rude, Rougeaus, Jim Garvin.

Jan. 1989: The Horsemen Destroyed! The World Title Gained! But The Midnight Express Must Still Prove Themselves! Also: Top Guns, Hart & Rougeaus, Andre-Savage-Hulk, Terry Gordy, Kevin Von Erich.

Feb. 1989: The Road Warriors: "Sting, Dusty, & The Fans Can Go To Hell!" Also: Madusa Miceli, Blue Blazer, Warrior-Hogan, Bigelow-Gordy, Eddie Gilbert.

March 1989: Scared Stiff! "Don't Say Snake!" Also: Jeff Jarrett, Cactus Jack, Ric Flair, Bam Bam Bigelow, Hercules, Iron Sheik.

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June 1989: Ultimate Warrior's Mission Impossible: Destroy Randy Savage For Hulk Hogan. Also: Rick Steamboat, Rick Martel, Larry Zbyszko, Luger-Windham by Sting, Ric Flair.

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Sept. 1989: Our Urgent Plea To Ric Flair: Don't Wrestle Terry Funk. Also: Demolition, Roddy Piper, Hogan-Zeus, Larry Zbyszko, Jerry Lawler.

Oct. 1989: No Holds Barred! Hogan & Beefcake vs. Savage & Zeus: An Exclusive Preview & Analysis. Also: Eric Embry, Four Horsemen, Teddy Long, Hayes-Luger, Art Barr, Billy Jack Haynes.

Nov. 1989: Roddy Piper Pins Randy Savage ... And Hulk Hogan Is Scared Stiff! Also: Mr. T & Von Erichs, Garvin & Hayes, Flair-T. Funk, Dustin-Steel Man, Sgt. Slaughter.

Jan. 1990: The Hulk Hogan Book Of Lists. Also: Brian Pillman, Rich-Luger, Tully & Arn, P.Y. Chu-Hi, Greg Gagne.

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Nov. 1991: Lex Luger Wins The Title—But Loses His Fans. Also: Rick Steamboat, Roddy Piper, Global, Diamond Studd, Lawler-Embry.

Dec. 1991: Roddy Piper's Exclusive Analysis: Flair vs. Hogan—Who Will Win The Match Of The Century? Also: Sting, 25 greatest teams, Beverly, Cactus Jack.

Jan. 1992: The LOD's Championship Catastrophe: Overpowered By The Natural Disasters. Also: Johnny B. Badd, Mr. Hughes, Jake Roberts, Ronnie Gossett.

Feb. 1992: Shocking WWF Report: McMahon Offers Bounty On Flair—Will Vince Pay The Piper? Also: Ron Simmons, Tito Santana, Bob Backlund, R. Steiner-Abdullah.

March 1992: After Survivor Series & Tuesday In Texas: Has The WWF Title Suffered Irreparable Damage? Also: Brian Pillman, Anderson & Bruiser, Rude-Sting, Mountie-Hart, Jeff Jarrett.

April 1992: After A Year Of Tragedy & Turmoil: The Magic Is Back In WCW! Also: Chris Candido, Paul Orndorff, Lady X, Paul Bearer, Hennig & Flair, Michaels & Jannetty.

Dec. 1992: He's *Baaaaaack!* Jake Roberts Slithers Into WCW. Also: Paul E. Dangerously, Ron Simmons, Hulk Hogan, Michaels-Martel, Gilberts-Rock 'n' Rolls.

May 1992: He Rumbled Past 29 Men ... Ric Flair's Hour Of Power: Can One Man Stop Him At WrestleMania VIII? Also: Anderson & Eaton, Roddy Piper, Dusty Rhodes, USWA, Don Owen.

June 1992: In Ric Flair's High-Stakes Championship Game, Hulk Hogan & Sid Justice Are Mere Pawns. Also: Eddie Gilbert, Ultimate Warrior, Vinnie Vegas, WCW titles, Koko B. Ware.

July 1992: "Number Two Just Won't Do": For Rick Rude, The U.S. Belt Means Failure: Also: Madusa, Gorilla Monsoon, LOD, Nurse Vanessa, Greg Valentine, Sabu.

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Nov. 1992: WWF Beware! It's The Perfect Time For A Curt Hennig Comeback! Also: Crush, Butch Reed, Sting, Buddy Rogers, Dan Spivey.

Jan. 1993: Sting Turns Sadistic: "Hurting Jake Makes Me Happy!" Also: Anderson & Eaton, Bushwhackers-Moondogs, Ramon-Savage, Natural Disasters, Masa Chono.

Feb. 1993: WWF Champion Bret Hart: His Five Most Dangerous Challenges. Also: Sgt. Slaughter, Steve Austin, Rick Steiner, Bob Backlund, Terry Taylor.

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Nov. 1993: Bret Hart vs. Lex Luger: It's Not Over Yet! Also: Rude-Dustin, Hulk Hogan, Marty Jannetty, Heavenly Bodies, Tatanka, Sherri Martel.

Jan. 1994: Roasted, Broiled, Fried, Baked ... Any Way You Cook It, Hogan's A Chicken! Also: Rude-Flair, Bagwell & Scorpio, Jim Cornette, Jerry Lawler, Hansen & T. Funk-Abdullah & Sullivan.

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Aug. 1994: Bret's Nightmare Team Becomes A Reality: Owen Hart & Yokozuna. Also: Cactus-Vader, MOM, Flair-Badd, Nasty Boys, Luna Vachon.

Sept. 1994 (Special Issue): WWF Midyear Report! Also: Big Van Vader, Parker-Hollywood Blonds, Sting-Rude, WWF legal problems, Prince Kharis, Bunkhouse-Rhodes, Public Enemy.

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Jan. 1995: Our Holiday Wish List For 1995. Also: Johnny B. Badd, DiBiase-Tatanka, Bob Backlund, PG-13, Hacksaw Duggan.

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Nov. 1995: "Take That—And Shut Up!" If Savage Can't Silence Flair, He's Through! Also: Mabel, Jarrett-Ramon, Renegade, WWF legends roundtable.

Dec. 1995 (Special Issue): 20Shawn Michaels: Too Good To Be Second Best! Also: Wrestling rulebook, Vega-Ramon, Mama Cornette, Kamala-Duggan, Big Van Vader.

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May 1996: WWF In-Vader! Can Bret, Shawn, & Razor Play The Pain Game? Also: Public Enemy, Steve Austin, wrestling oddities, Kensuke Sasaki, Ric Flair.

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July 1997: Infighting, Politics, Egos: Is The NWO Losing Its Edge? Also: WWF-ECW, Dean Malenko, Super 8 tourney, Jerry Lawler.

Sept. 1997 (Special Issue): WWF Midyear Report: Plus: NWO, Shawn-Bret, football players, Terry & Dory Funk, Luna.

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April 1998: "We've Won!" Maybe ... But Can The NWO Handle Its Own Success? Also: Ken Shamrock, Steiners-Warriors, Douglas & Francine, Rocky Maivia.

June 1998 (Special Issue): "Hollywood" Hogan: 10 More Dirt Deeds ... And He's Outta Here! Also: Randy Savage, DeGeneration X, Jim Cornette, Randy Savage, then and now.

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Oct. 1998: The Mother Of All Pay-Per-Views! A WWF-WCW Supercard Is No Longer Just Talk! Also: Sable, Undertaker, Randy Savage, Sabu & Van Dam.

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Jan. 1999: Stone-Cold's Personal Survivor Series. Also: Rock-HHH, NWA, Bret Hart, Howard Finkel, three-way title matches.

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June 1999 (Special Issue): Ric Flair: The 10 Feats He Must Accomplish Before He's Through. Also: Rocky Maivia, Juventud Guerrera, Billy Gunn, body parts quiz section.

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the JAPAN REPORT

By Mike Spillane

IT'S A FAIRLY safe bet—if there's controversy in Japanese wrestling in 2001, **Genichiro Tenryu** is probably involved. Even during his days as a top star with SWS, and later WAR, Tenryu always seemed to be at the center of upheaval and dramatic change. When **Mitsuharu Misawa** and most of All-Japan's active roster left the company to form Pro Wrestling NOAH last year, Tenryu abandoned his cushy job with New Japan Pro Wrestling to help save the ailing company by bolstering its weak lineup.

Now Tenryu, a former Triple Crown and IWGP heavyweight champion, is at it again. This time, he's reuniting with some of his old partners from the WAR promotion within the ranks of All-Japan. Already in the group's grasp is the All-Japan International tag title, which Tenryu holds with **Yoji Anjoh**, a skilled martial artist and submission wrestler.

Also part of the new WAR group are **Arashi** and **Koki Kitahara**. These two men are also tag champions, having won the All-Japan All-Asian tag title by beating **Nobutaka Araya** and **Shigeo Okumura**. While Araya and Okumura have been regulars with All-Japan for some time, the victory was particularly sweet for Tenryu's new clique since both Araya and Okumura are *ex*-WAR wrestlers. The WAR promotion has only promoted the occasional card since the late-1990s, and many wrestlers departed for other opportunities as its days of running regular shows were ending.

Both Araya and Okumura, for instance, left WAR for All-Japan some time ago, and Tenryu hasn't been eager to embrace them, regarding them as traitors to the WAR cause. While Tenryu's WAR team has accumulated a nice little collection of tag belts, Tenryu is more interested in recovering the All-Japan Triple Crown, a championship he lost to **Keiji Muto** in June.

While they have met in some tag team matches, Tenryu hasn't been able to secure a shot at Muto and the Triple Crown yet. Standing in Tenryu's way is **Taiyo Kea**, one of All-Japan's top stars, and, incidentally, a member of Muto's **BATT** stable. In New Japan, Muto's BATT group, which also includes **Jinsei "Hakushi" Shinzaki** and **Hiroshi Hase**, is at odds with **Masa Chono** and his **Team 2000**, comprised mostly of former NWO Japan members.

Now this feud has carried over to All-Japan, as Chono has taken in **Mike Barton** (previously known as **Bart Gunn** in the WWF), as well as **Steve Williams** and **Mike Rotundo**. Both BATT and Team 2000 now feature a mix of wrestlers from All-Japan and New Japan, although the BATT team is almost three times as large. Despite the drastic difference in numbers, Muto's team continues to build momentum, and Muto himself has never been hotter. Holding on to the Triple Crown with a vise-like grip, he has been fighting off challengers, most recently **Scott Hall**, with his shining wizard finisher.

Although he seems to be in the crosshairs of a number of groups, from Chono's Team 2000 to Tenryu's WAR group, Muto keeps coming out on top.

All-Japan fans, who were quick to condemn the Triple Crown title reign of Muto (an outsider), are slowly being converted. Loyal New Japan fans can certainly relate to the situation in All-Japan. The IWGP heavyweight title, the company's top championship, is in the hands of **Kazuyuki Fujita**, a martial artist who is not on the company's full-time roster. New Japan stars like **Kensuke Sasaki**, Masa Chono, and **Manabu Nakanishi** are already lining up for title shots, though, and hoping to bring the IWGP title back to New Japan. □

Genichiro Tenryu is a busy man in Japan these days. He's a co-holder of the All-Japan International tag title and he continues to pursue the All-Japan Triple Crown. He's also part of a WAR clique within All-Japan.

the MEXICO REPORT

By Mike Spillane

WHAT'S IN A name? Well, if the name is **Los Infernales**, then there are a few decades worth of historical significance to Lucha Libre to be found, and it's a name that almost everyone in EMLL is fighting over.

Now, a trio led by **El Satanico**, an aging veteran and long-time *rudo* in Mexico, is once again fighting with the highest of stakes to lay permanent claim to the Infernales name. Satanico was one of the original members of Los Infernales in the 1970s, and, flanked by **Averno** and **Mephisto**, he's willing to risk major humiliation to put those "other" Infernales out of action.

The new Infernales are also a group of *rudos*—**Rey Bucanero**, **Ultimo Guerrero**, and **Mascara Magica**—and they want the name of the legendary stable all to themselves. To decide who will be able to take the name, all six men have agreed to do battle on the upcoming EMLL anniversary show, traditionally among the promotion's biggest of the year. What will make this match so interesting are the proposed stipulations, which force every participant to put something on the line. Satanico will offer up his long, black hair, while partners Mephisto and Averno will put their masks on the line. Bucanero, Guerrero, and Magica will all put up their hair or masks.

For most grudge matches, that would be enough, but the war over the Infernales name has raged on for the better part of a year, and to make certain this really is the final chapter in the epic battle, even more stipulations have been added. When the original Infernales meet the new Infernales at Arena Mexico, it will be inside a steel cage, an incredible rarity for EMLL matches like this. To try to prevent outside interference, officials want to have **Tarzan Boy**, who typically sides with the new Infernales, handcuffed to the cage as well. The entire event will be aired on pay-per-view, a fitting celebration for the longest-running wrestling company active today.

Abismo Negro took great delight in slowing down the momentum of young AAA star Alebrije by beating him in a hair vs. hair match. Negro is likely to get a chance to take his mask next.

Big news in AAA is the fact that the popular pairing of **Alebrije** and his mini counterpart, **Cuije**, just keep winning over more and more fans. One wrestler, **Abismo Negro**, made it his personal mission to curtail Alebrije's growing popularity by fighting him in a hair vs. hair match. While a match with this stipulation is hardly uncommon in Mexico, the circumstances of this one made it highly unusual. Abismo Negro won the best-of-three-falls match, but only thanks to outside interference that the diminutive Cuije was helpless to halt.

Actually, Abismo Negro only *appeared* to win the third fall with outside help, as officials from the backstage area came out and overturned the decision. A *fourth* fall was then added, and to the amazement of the fans there, Abismo Negro managed to win that as well. Alebrije's mask was removed, and his hair shaved off, though he held a towel in front of his face to conceal his identity. For the moment, Abismo has slowed Alebrije's rise to superstardom. Alebrije, however, is looking to put his mask on the line to bait Abismo Negro into a rematch and perhaps get his revenge.

AAA ran one of its biggest shows, *Verano de Escandalo* (roughly translated to "Summer Scandal"), selling out El Toreo in Naucalpan. The show is now an annual event and is unusual in that it sometimes includes the use of a strange hexagon ring. The card drew 18,000 fans, and a number of surprise guests helped to ignite the crowd. Long-time favorite **Super Crazy** made an appearance, **Hector Garza** defeated **Perro Aguayo Jr.** in a chain/dog-collar match, and in the main event, **Canek**, **Zorro**, **Heavy Metal**, and **Latin Lover**, a popular team of *technicos*, defeated **Cibernetico**, Abismo Negro, **Electro Shock**, and one of **The Headhunters**. □

arena reports

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SPOTLIGHT CARD OF THE MONTH

JACKSONVILLE, FL—WWF at the Coliseum: **Tajiri** pinned **Justin Credible** ... **Chris Jericho** defeated **Raven** by submission ... **The Hardy Boyz** & **Lita** beat **The Hurricane, Lance Storm,** & **Ivory** ... WWF hardcore champion **Rob Van Dam** pinned WWF light heavyweight & WCW cruiserweight champion **X-Pac** in a non-title match ... **Kane** & **The Undertaker** beat WCW World tag team champions **Booker T** & **Test** by disqualification ... **Bradshaw** pinned **Mike Awesome** ... WWF World tag team champions **The Dudley Boyz** beat **The Big Show** & **Spike Dudley** ... WWF Intercontinental champion **Christian** pinned **Edge** ... WWF World champion **Kurt Angle** pinned **Steve Austin**.
(09-29-01)

—"Spotlight" photos by Duane Long

UNITED STATES

FLORIDA

MOSSY HEAD—Panhandle Championship Wrestling at the Community Center: **Cobra** beat **JL** by disqualification ... **Trooper** defeated Florida heavyweight champion **Don Lirette** by disqualification ... **Pete the Pirate** wrestled **Chief Little Bear** to a draw ... Tag team champions **The Swat Team** beat **Mr. Hardcore** & **Mike Metal**.
(09-15-01)

—Laurie Casey

YBOR CITY—IPW Hardcore Wrestling at Frankie's Patio: **The Southern Posse** & **Rastaman** defeated **The New Heavenly Bodies** & **Iceman Buck Q** ... Heavyweight champ **Scoot Andrews** defeated **A.J. Styles** ... Tag team champs **The Shane Brothers** defeated **Quickiemart** ... **Snow** won a three-way match against **Devin** and **Stormtrooper** ... Hardcore champ **Havoc** defeated **Chaos** ... NWA Wildside cruiserweight champ **Jimmy Rave** defeated **Naphtali** ... **Python** & **Michael Todd** defeated **Sean Hill** & **Mark Zout** ... **Dee Dee Venturi** defeated **Molly Holly**.
(09-05-01)

—Kyle Niblett

HOLIDAY—New Breed Pro Wrestling at Planet Xtreme: U.S. champ **Rod Steel** wrestled **Sean Hill** to a no-contest ... **Naphtali** defeated cruiserweight champion **Phil** to win the title ... **Navy SEAL** pinned **Von Tankard** ... **Quickiemart** defeated **Devin Nash** & **Kamikaze Kid**.
(09-02-01)

—Ed Eggsterly

GEORGIA

WHITE—Southern States Outlaw Wrestling at the Travel Lodge Ballroom: **Silky Boom Boom** beat **Mike Cross** ... **Morphine** beat **Bobby Hayes** by disqualification ... **C.C. Develion** beat **A.J. Waldram** ... **Rob Adonis** defeated **The Freak** ... **John Arden** & **Billy Love** defeated **Jeremy Jacobs** & **Morphine** ... **Kenny Arden** beat **J.W. Christian**.
(09-22-01)

—Justin Ramey

CORNELIA—NWA Wildside at the NCW Arena: **Mike Harden** beat **Jeremy V** ... **G-Rated** beat **Mike Pittman** & **Slim J** ... **Caprice Coleman** beat **Jeremy Lopez** ... **David Young** & **Terry Knight** beat **Todd Sexton** & **Tony Stradlin** ... Junior heavyweight champion **Jimmy Rave** wrestled **J.C. Dazz** to a double-countout ... **Inazuma** beat **Cooter Calhoun** ... **Lance Dreamer** beat **Mr. Delicious** ... **The Lost Boys** defeated **Homicide** & **Rainman** by disqualification ... Heavyweight champion **Scottie Wrenn** beat **David Young** ... **A.J. Styles** & **Onyx** beat **Adam Jacobs** & **J.C. Dazz**.
(09-15-01)

—L.A. Goodman

ILLINOIS

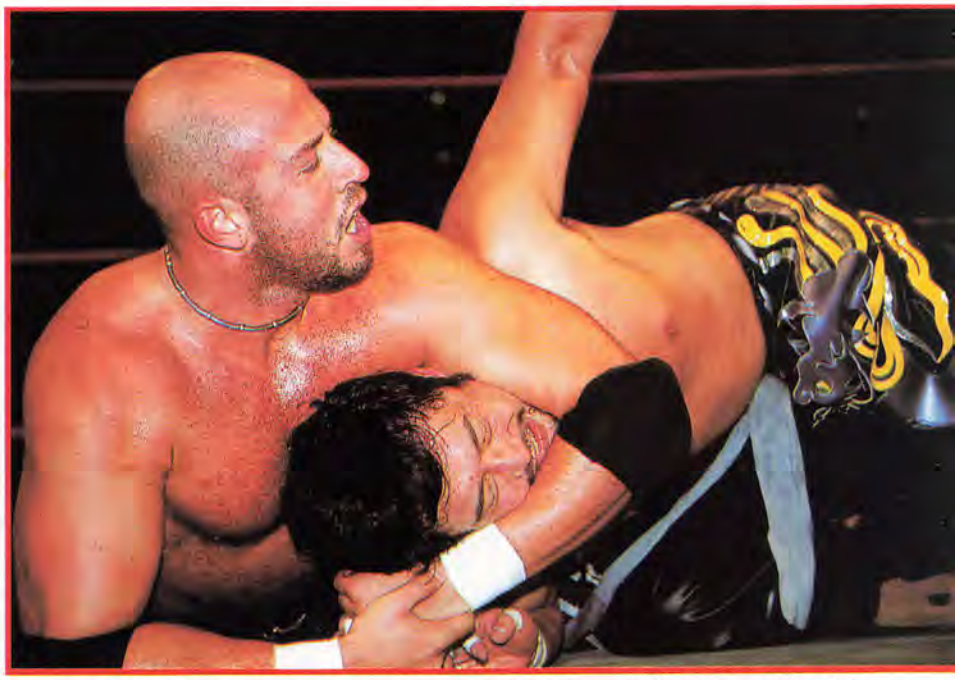
MIDLOTHIAN—Lunatic Wrestling Federation's "Supreme Measures" card at the Recreation Center: **The Baseball Furies** wrestled to a double-disqualification with **Grin** & **Machine** ... **Ice Bew** beat **Bill Munoz** ... **Bill Patrick** beat Intercontinental champion **Maverick** to win the title ... Hardcore champion **Mini Jones** beat **Curse** ... **Magnificent Mike** defeated **Stryc-9** ... **Ryan Boz** beat heavyweight champion **Grudge** to win the title ... **Vic Capri** & **Brandon Bishop** beat **Airborne** & **Havok**.
(09-22-01)

—Michelle & Rachel Nixon

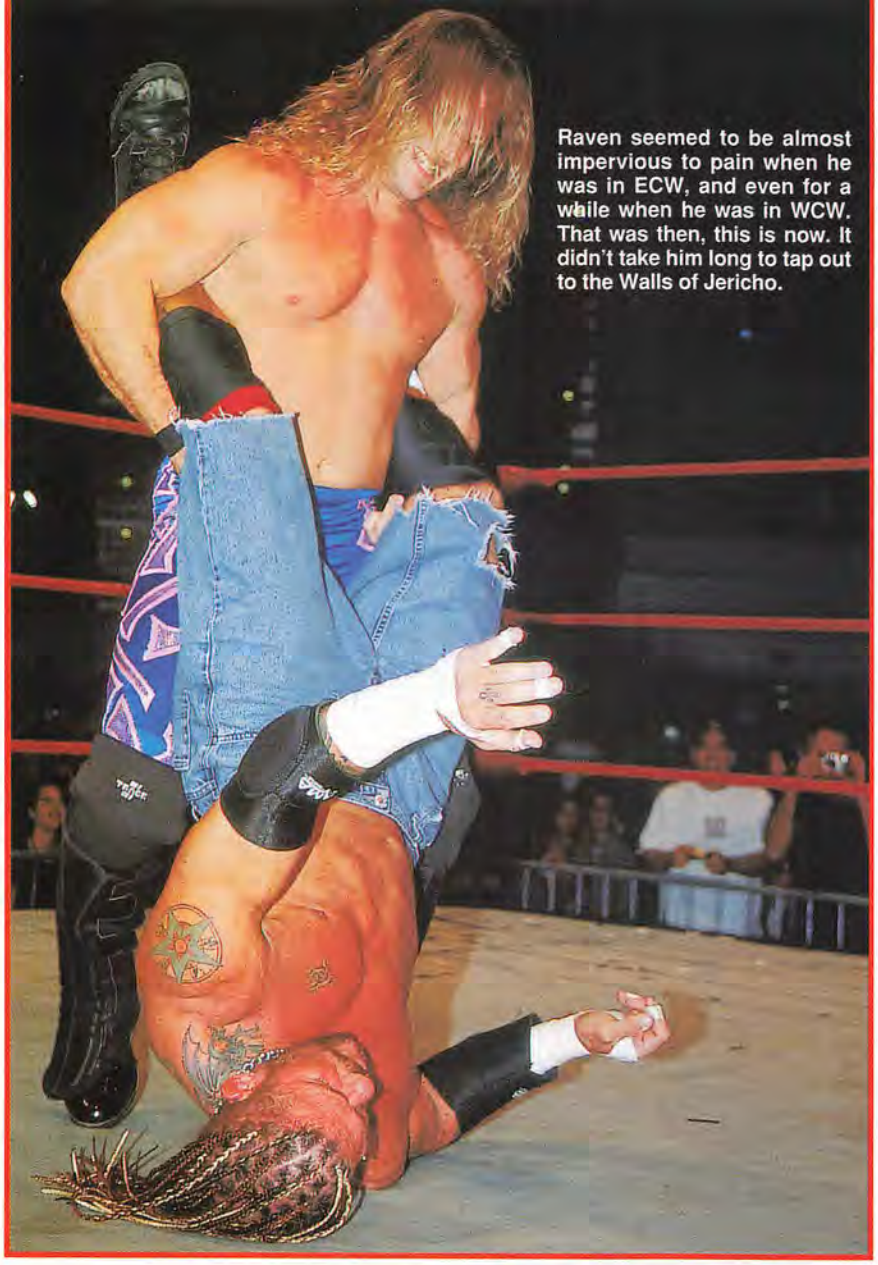
INDIANA

BICKNELL—National Wrestling Coalition at the Knox County Fairgrounds: **Timber** pinned **Scorpio** ... **Kubotan** defeated **Sgt. York** ... **Steven Davis** beat **Phoenix** ... **T-Bolt Baxton** defeated **Hoosier Assassin** ... **Just Josh** beat **Tommy Calloway** and **Striker** in a triple threat match ... TV champion **Brian the Lion** and **Shuto** wrestled to a double-disqualification.
(09-26-01)

—Brad Smithson



You have to do more than apply an extended chinlock on Tajiri to beat him. "The Japanese Buzzsaw" is outweighed even by Credible, who's not exactly huge, but he had enough weapons in his repertoire to beat his Alliance rival.



Raven seemed to be almost impervious to pain when he was in ECW, and even for a while when he was in WCW. That was then, this is now. It didn't take him long to tap out to the Walls of Jericho.

COLUMBUS—Hoosier Pro Wrestling at the Bartholomew County 4-H Fairgrounds: **Ric Cox**, **John York**, & **Tello Ozeata** defeated **Chris Blaze**, **Jack Manson**, & **Diablo** ... **Scotty Lovins** defeated **Barlow Whatley** ... **J.R.** & **J.H. Hogg** beat **Dave Dynasty** & **Jimi Tyndal** ... **Dave Dynasty** & **Jesse Houston** beat **Psycho**, **Mercedes**, & **Renegade** in a handicap match ... **Mr. Big** defeated **Pyro** ... **Bobo Brazil Jr.** & **Big Dada** beat **John York** & **Tello Ozeata** ... **Brian Beach** defeated **Sam Cody** in a hardcore match ... **Tommy Ray Sands** defeated heavyweight champ **Ox Harley** to win the title.
(09-08-01)

—Mike Rolls

KENTUCKY

BEDFORD—Bad 2 the Bone Wrestling at the Morgan Community Center: **Billy Black** wrestled **Low Rider** to a double-disqualification ... **Maxx Mizery** pinned **PsychoDelic** ... **Simon Sezz** defeated **J.C. Bailey.** ... **Kappa Tappa Kegga** beat **Southern Express** by disqualification ... **BioHazard** pinned heavyweight champ **Manslaughter** to win the title.
(09-01-01)

—Frank Miller

MARYLAND

BALTIMORE—Mid-Eastern Wrestling Federation at the Teamsters Hall: **Rayne** pinned **Blood** ... **Stevie Riggs** won a four-way match against **Hurricane Kidd**, **Mr. Destiny**, and **Derek Wayne** ... **Steve Camry** & **Lunar** beat **Sebastian Coverdale** & **Joe Thunder** ... **Ryker** beat **Ruckus** ... Mid-Atlantic champ **Morgus the Maniac** beat **Blood** ... Tag team champs **Keushiro** & **Watsumi** beat **Buster Maccabi** & **Mad Dog O'Malley** ... **Eagle** & **Psycho Gangster** pinned **Tommy Hawk** & **Stevie Riggs** ... **Derek Frazier** beat **The Cat Burglar** in a jailhouse match ... **Buzz Stryker** & **Rayne** beat tag team champs **Keushiro** & **Watsumi** to win the title.
(09-16-01)

—Jeff Amdur

HAGERSTOWN—House of Pain Wrestling Federation at the House of Pain: **Cashis Carter** won a battle royal ... **Jesse Valentine** beat **J.C. the Syracuse Hammer** ... **Syck** defeated **Five Fingers of Death** & **Nicholas Tide** ... **Biggs** beat **American Jackass** by disqualification ... **Jake Davis** beat **Cashis Carter** ... **Flex Fenom** pinned **The Freak.**
(09-03-01)

—Michael J. DiMuzio

MASSACHUSETTS

LAWRENCE—Chaotic Wrestling at the Knights of Columbus Hall: **John Walters** beat TV champ **Wagner Brown** to win the title ... **Vince Vicallo** beat **Cueball** ... **Rick Fuller** & **Mike Studd** beat **Timothy McNeany** & **The Yankee Rebel** ... **The Boston Brawler** beat **Dukes Dalton** ... **The Dynamic Kidd** beat **The Convict** by disqualification ... **Edward G. Xtasy** & **Aaron Stevens** beat **Arch** & **April Kincaid** ... Tag team champs **Little Guido Maritato** & **Luis Ortiz** beat **Scarecrow** & **Jimmy Cash** ... **Ronnie B. Lishus** beat **Gino Martino** to win the heavyweight title.
(09-07-01)

—Amy Bucklar

WORCESTER—WWF at the Centrum Centre: WWF light heavyweight & WCW cruiserweight champion **X-Pac** beat **Spike Dudley** ... **Christian** defeated **Justin Credible** ... **The Hurricane** & **Ivory** defeated **Matt Hardy** & **Lita** ... **Raven** beat **Perry Saturn** ... **Albert** defeated **Chuck Palumbo** ... **Kurt Angle** defeated **Rhyno** by submission ... WWF Intercontinental champion **Edge** pinned **Lance Storm** ... WCW U.S. champion **Chris Kanyon** beat **Jeff Hardy** ... **Chris Jericho** pinned WWF hardcore champion **Rob Van Dam** in a non-title match ... **Bradshaw**, **Faarooq**, & **The Undertaker** defeated **The Dudley Boyz** & **Test.**
(09-01-01)

—Charles Segal

MINNESOTA

FRIDLEY—Minnesota Independent Wrestling at the Main Event Bar & Grill: **Soul Brotha I** beat cruiserweight champion **Robbie Thunder** to win the title ... **Travis Sharpe** beat **J.R. the Punisher** ... **Chuck Diesel** beat beat **J. Van Buren** & **Havoc** in a handicap match ... **Pete Huge** beat **Horace the Psychopath** ... **Chi-Town Thug** beat **Magnus Maximus** in a match to determine the new heavyweight champion ... **Big Daddy Hoofer** & **K-Train** beat tag team champions **J.B. Trask** & **Johnny Parks** in a non-title brass knuckles-on-a-pole match.
(09-15-01)

—Tim Larson

MISSOURI

VERSAILLES—World League Wrestling at the Middle School: **Derek McQuinn** defeated **Marc Godecker** ... **Bull Schmitt** wrestled to a time-limit draw with **The Drill Instructor** ... **Marc Godecker** & **Trevor Rhodes** defeated **Josh Besore** & **Derek McQuinn** ... **Wade Chism** beat **Matt Murphy** ... **Wade Chism** beat **Johnny Gold** ... Ladies champion **Heather Savage** beat **Miss Natural** by disqualification ... Heavyweight champion **Butch Reed** defeated **Ron Harris.**
(09-29-01)

—Mario Capuzzi

NEW JERSEY

BAYONNE—Jersey All Pro Wrestling at Charity Hall: **Moondog Wenzel** defeated **Judas Young** ... **Kory K** defeated **Slayer** ... **Billy Reil** & **Kid America** beat **Marc Reil** & **Dave Greco** ... **Deranged** defeated **Ghost Shadow** ... **Rockin' Rebel** & **Crazy Ivan** defeated **Magic** & **Laithon** ... **The Blue Boy** defeated **Don Montoya** ... **Kid Kruel** beat **Ron Zombie** ... **Flash Wheeler** & **Ryan Wing** beat **Dr. Heresy** & **Frankie Armadillo** ... Tag team champs **The Hit Squad** defeated **J.T. Jobber** & **Elax** ... New Jersey state champion **Dixie** defeated **Rick Silver** ... **Chris Hamrick** defeated **Supreme Lee Great** ...

Heavyweight champion **Homicide** defeated **Insane Dragon** ... **Crowbar** defeated **Low-Ki** by disqualification.
(09-21-01)

—Alan Keiser

WEST PATERSON—IWF at Camp IWF: **Ryan Lockhart** beat **The BPA** ... **Josh Daniels** defeated **Rob Eckos** ... **Dylan Black** pinned **Kevin Kage** ... **Damian Adams** & **Hadrian** beat tag team champs **Allison Danger** & **Biggie Biggs** to win the title ... **Kasey Koresh** & **Ed Moore** beat **Al Ace** & **Eloy Fiesta** ... **Kevin Knight** beat heavyweight champ **Roman** in a non-title match.
(09-16-01)

—Dorothy Podsvirow

SEWELL—Combat Zone Wrestling at Champs Indoor Sports Arena: **Ian Knoxx** won a three-way dance against **Chris Cash** and **G.Q.** ... **Quiet Storm** won a three-way dance against **Chris Divine** and **Brian XL** ... **Danny Rose** & **Adam Flash** beat **Jeff Rocker** & **Ty Street** ... **Nick Berk** & **Z Barr** defeated **Chris Divine** & **Brian XL** ... **Ruckus** won a three-way match against **Johnny Kashmere** and Big Japan junior heavyweight champ **Trent Acid** to win the title ... **Zandig** & **Nick Mondo** wrestled ironman champ **Nick Gage** & **Nate Hatred** to a no-contest ... Tag team champs **Trent Acid** & **Johnny Kashmere** beat **Eddie Valentine** & **Jon Dahmer** ... Heavyweight champion **Justice Pain** defeated **Jay Briscoe**.
(09-08-01)

—Pete Busch

NEW YORK

ELMURST—Ultimate Championship Wrestling at the Elks Lodge: **Xavier** defeated **Prince Nana** ... **Low-Ki** beat **Red** ... **The Spanish Announce Team** defeated **Tony Mamaluke** & **Little Guido Maritato** ... **The Hit Squad** defeated **Boogaloo Lou** & **Homicide** ... **Tom Marquez** defeated **Judas Young** ... **Damian Dragon** beat **Abunai** ... **Divine** beat **Striker** ... **Low Rider** and **Deranged** co-won a three-way match over **Brian XL**.
(09-15-01)

—Dominick Valenti

Isn't The Hurricane supposed to be the superhero? For a split-second, Lance Storm must have thought he was looking up at his partner rather than Jeff Hardy, who flew through the air with the greatest of ease en route to helping *his* team win.

SUFFOLK—Killer Kowalski's All Stars at Suffolk Downs: **Darren Disenzo** beat **Cueball** ... **Jimmy Cash** beat **Mike Studd** ... **Peter Too Fly** beat **Kid Trance** ... **Jaime Pain** beat **Nemesis** ... **Amanda Storm** & **Arch Kincaid** beat **April Hunter** & **Vince Vicallo** ... **Wagner Brown** beat **John Walters** ... **Boston Brawler, Tony Roy**, & **Matt Peterson** beat **Zachary Springate III, Tre the Smooth Operator**, & **Predator** ... **Aron Stevens** beat **Doink the Clown**.
(09-15-01)

—Chris Faulk

NORTH CAROLINA

PILOT MOUNTAIN—NCWF at East Surry High School: **Azreal** defeated **Lurch** ... AIWF champ **Creeping Death** wrestled **Sweet Daddy** to a draw ... Tag team champs **The Tennessee Violence Authority** defeated **The Scorpion** & **Robert Roma** ... **Ed Ferrara** defeated **The American Shadow** ... **Dynamite Doug** & **Major Havoc** defeated **Lodi** & **Johnny the Bull** ... **Buff Bagwell** defeated **Disco Inferno**.
(09-22-01)

—Dean Puckett

WILSON—Continental Championship Wrestling at the Fairgrounds: Cruiserweight champion **Cage** beat **Magnum T.R.** ... **Joe Riot** beat **Dr. X** ... **Nemesis** wrestled **Seven** to a draw ... **Flex Phenom** & **Adam Briggs** beat **The Southern Connection** ... **Viper** beat **Marc Ash**.
(09-21-01)

—Marcus Watkins

ROBBINS—NWA Mid-Atlantic at North Moore High School: MACW hardcore champion **Andrue Bane** beat **Terry Taylor** ... **Madd Maxx** pinned MACW junior heavyweight champ **Rikki Nelson** in a non-title match ... **Colt Steele** pinned **J.W. Boss** ... **Super Kazmo** pinned **Thunderfoot I** ... **Trooper Justice** pinned **Russian Assassin**.
(09-08-01)

—Dan Parris

OHIO

DAYTON—Northern Wrestling Federation at the Burkhardt Center: **Jason Cross** beat **Dregen** ... **Man Mountain** beat **Big Jim** ... **Zodiac II** beat **Zach Avery** ... Tri-state champion **Dozer** beat **Brian Beech** ... **Taxi** & **Brett Michaels** beat **Roger Ruffen** & **Nick Rivers** ... **Jason Cross** beat **Tyr** ... **Prince Justice** beat **Chris Harris** ... **Stamp Lickage** beat **Sam Cody** in a tables match.
(09-22-01)

—Kirk Sheppard

DELAWARE—Big Time Pro Wrestling at the Delaware County Fair: **Justin Sane** beat **Stevie Lee** ... **Sean Casey** defeated **Brian O** ... **Jennifer Dowdy** defeated **Lady Victoria** ... **Doink the Clown** beat **T. Rantula** ... **Bushwhacker Luke** & **Kwee Wee** defeated **Ike Jones** & **Dusty Dillon**.
(09-19-01)

—Holly Watkins

AKRON—American Independent Wrestling Alliance at the Akron Bible Church: **Chris Cole** & **Chaos** defeated **Aero** & **Gabriel Knight** ... Cruiserweight champ **Micro Menace** defeated **Spence Slater** ... **J-Rocc** beat **Chris Leary** ... Tag team champs **Klub X-treme** defeated **Alcatraz** & **Chuck Brody** ... **Bubba the Stompin' Hillbilly** defeated **Prince Juggalo** to become the new hardcore champion ... **Bouncer, Fury**, & **Ash** co-won a battle royal.
(09-15-01)

—Jeff Gershman

CLEVELAND—Cleveland Wrestling Alliance at the Stars of Lebanon Hall: **Roadhog** pinned **J. Miracle** ... **Prince Juggalo** defeated **Stick Figure Jones** ... **Troy Buchannan** defeated **Ian Decay** ... **L.Z. Sack** beat **The Lunatic** ... **Klub X-treme** defeated CWA tag team champs **The Ruff Nex** to win the title ... NEPW triple crown champion **J-Rocc** pinned **Spence Slater** ... TV champion **Sheik Hassan** pinned **Hellfire** ... CWA heavyweight champion **G-Moe** defeated **Johnny Blaze** in a weapons match.
(09-02-01)

—Jim Johnson

OKLAHOMA

TULSA—Oklahoma Pro Wrestling at the OPW

The good news for X-Pac was that with a garbage can covering his head, he couldn't see this brutal RVD kick coming. The bad news was that it still hurt—*and* he lost the match.

Arena: **Michael Faith** defeated **Bolo** ... **The Texas Outlaws** defeated **Brian Lakewood** & **Brandon Groom** ... **Big Daddy Moore** defeated light heavyweight champion **Dexter Hardaway** ... Tag team champs **The Valentinos** defeated **J.C.** & **K.C.** ... **Red Eagle** & **Miss Venom** defeated **Amanda St. George** & **Splash Jackson** ... **Michael Faith**, **J.C.**, & **K.C.** defeated **Bolo** & **The Valentinos**.
(09-08-01)

—C.M. Burnam

PENNSYLVANIA

PITTSBURGH—WWF Unforgiven pay-per-view at Mellon Arena: WWF World tag team champions **The Dudley Boyz** beat **The Hurricane** & **Lance Storm**, **The Big Show** & **Spike Dudley**, and **The Hardy Boyz** in a four-way dance ... **Perry Saturn** pinned **Raven** ... **Christian** pinned WWF Intercontinental champion **Edge** to win the title ... WCW World tag team champions **Kane** & **The Undertaker** defeated **Kronik** ... WWF hardcore champion **Rob Van Dam** pinned **Chris Jericho** ... WCW World champion **The Rock** defeated **Booker T** & **Shane McMahon** in a handicap match when he pinned Booker ... **Rhyno** pinned WCW U.S. champion **Tajiri** to win the title ... **Kurt Angle** defeated WWF World champion **Steve Austin** by submission to win the title.
(09-23-01)

—Mark W. Hill

READING—WWF at the Sovereign Center: **Raven** pinned **Perry Saturn** ... **Test** defeated **Chris Kanyon** ... **Lita** pinned **Molly Holly** ... **Bradshaw** pinned **Justin Credible** ... WCW U.S. champion **Tajiri** defeated **Rhyno** by disqualification ... **Albert** & **Kane** beat **Kronik** ... WWF Intercontinental champion **Edge** pinned **Christian** ... WWF World tag team champions **The Dudley Boyz** beat **The Big Show** & **Spike Dudley**, **The Hurricane** & **Lance Storm**, and **The Hardy Boyz** in a four-way match ... **Chris Jericho** pinned WWF hardcore champion **Rob Van Dam** in a non-title match.
(09-22-01)

—Todd Coleman

NEW CASTLE—Outlaw Championship Wrestling at the St. Vitus Gym: **Toby Cline** pinned **Brain Damage** ... **Jake Lawrence** pinned **The Assassin** ... **Doink the Clown** beat **Lord Zoltan** ... **Matt Borne** defeated **Brian O** ... **The Milwaukee Mauler** pinned **Seth James** to capture the vacant heavyweight title ... **Brian O** won a battle royal.
(09-13-01)

—Thomas L. Kerr

HAZLETON—World Xtreme Wrestling at Funfest: **Havoc** pinned **Rodney X** ... **Eric Kobin** pinned **Filthy Phil** ... **Big Poppa Pete** won a three-way dance against **Tomahawk** and **Shane Black** ... **Neil** & **Bob** beat **Andy Onnly** & **Bronx Bomber** ... **Brymm Stone** pinned **Wulf Ferguson** ... **Maleki** beat **Bronx Bomber** ... **Tommy Suede** defeated **Supreme Lee Great**.
(09-08-01)

—Mark Clemson

McKEES ROCKS—International Wrestling Cartel at the Emerald Room: **Matt Vandal** defeated **Brian Anthony** ... High stakes champion **Shirley Doe** beat **Cory K** by disqualification ... **Boomer Payne** beat **Brandon K** by countout ... **Devil Bhudakahn** beat **Mantis** ... **Jimmy Vegas** pinned **Protege** ... **Bubba the Bulldog** beat **Scott Gash** ... **Steve Corino** pinned **Orion**.
(09-08-01)

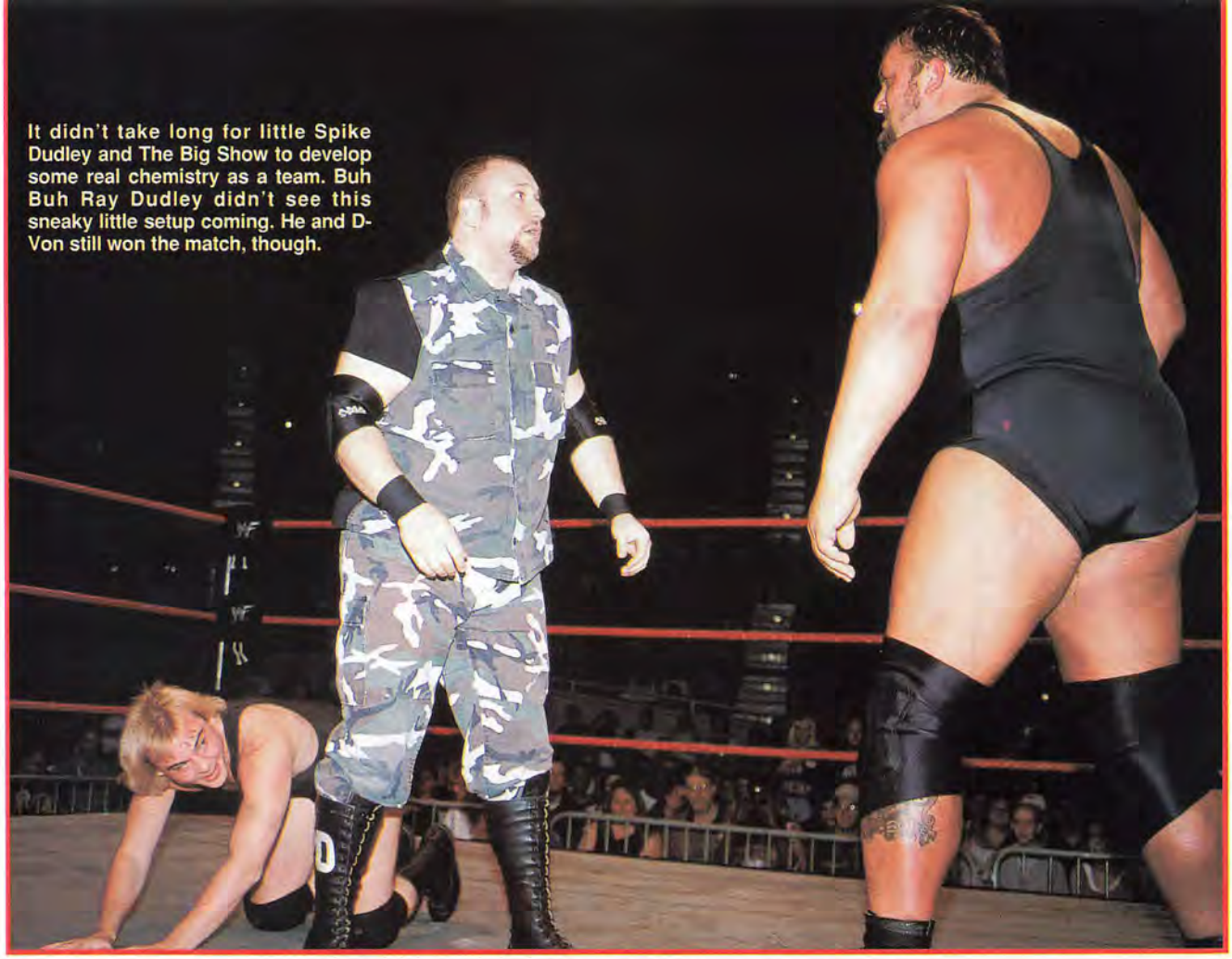
—Cody Ladd

SOUTH CAROLINA

GAFFNEY—United Championship Wrestling at Burns Ford Dealership: **Lee Storm** beat **Gravel** ... **Johnny B. Goode** wrestled **The Barbarian** to a double-countout ... **Neil Nitro** & **A.J. Frost** beat tag team champs **Sonny Dego** & **Tony Guliania** to win the title ... **Ice Pick** beat **Gravel** ... **Chilly Willy** beat **The Wild Samoan** ... **Jimmy Valiant** beat **Dr. X**.
(09-01-01)

—Dan Parris

Test derives a lot of pleasure from digging his huge boot into the neck of Kane, and "The Big Red Machine" didn't appreciate it. He and The Undertaker came back strong later, and Test and Booker T were lucky to only lose by DQ.



It didn't take long for little Spike Dudley and The Big Show to develop some real chemistry as a team. Buh Buh Ray Dudley didn't see this sneaky little setup coming. He and D-Von still won the match, though.

TENNESSEE

KINGSPORT—Southern States Wrestling at the Civic Auditorium: **Rob Williams** pinned **Justice** ... **David Garvin** pinned **Memphis Bodyguard** ... Appalachian champ **Bryan Wayne** & **Allen King** beat **Ray Idol** & **Tony Givens** ... **John Noble** & **Andy Douglas** beat **Bodyguard** & **Rocky Davis** ... **Flex Armstrong** beat heavyweight champ **Ricky Harrison** by disqualification ... **Jimmy Valiant** beat **Ace** ... **Original Masked Superstar** beat **Chris Harris** ... Tag team champions **The Batten Twins** beat **Beau James** & **K.C. Thunder** ... **Sabu** pinned **Tracey Smothers**.
(09-06-01)

—Fay Ferguson

TEXAS

NORTH RICHLAND HILLS—NWA Southwest at the Texas Indoor Arena: **B.J. Turner** wrestled **Jonah Dewald** to a no-contest ... **Dash Riproc** beat TV champ **John Allen** by disqualification ... **Prince Taylor** pinned **Brett Bonz** ... **Jimbo Starr** pinned TV champ **John Allen** in an impromptu non-title match ... **J.P. Black** pinned **Al Jackson** ... NWA Texas champ **Hotstuff Hernandez** beat **Mike Anthony** by disqualification.
(09-14-01)

—Rob Moore

AUSTIN—WWF at the Frank Erwin Center: WWF light heavyweight champion & WCW cruiserweight champion **X-Pac** defeated **Tajiri** ... **Hugh Morrus** & **Shawn Stasiak** beat **Crash** & **Hardcore Holly** ... **Jeff Hardy** beat **Chuck Palumbo** ... **Albert** pinned **Lance Storm** ... WWF hardcore champion **Rob Van Dam** pinned **Raven** ... **Bradshaw**, **Faarooq**, & **The Undertaker** beat **The Dudley Boyz** & **Test** ... WCW U.S. champion **Chris Kanyon** pinned **Billy Gunn** ... **The Hurricane** & **Ivory** defeated **Matt Hardy** & **Lita** ... WWF Intercontinental champion **Edge** pinned **Rhyno** ... WCW World champion **The Rock** beat WWF World champion **Steve Austin** by disqualification when **The Dudley Boyz** interfered.
(09-09-01)

—Jan Robertson

DALLAS—WWF at the American Airlines Arena: WWF light heavyweight champion & WCW cruiserweight champion **X-Pac** defeated **Tajiri** ... **Hugh Morrus** & **Shawn Stasiak** beat **Crash** & **Hardcore Holly** ... **Jeff Hardy** pinned **Chuck Palumbo** ... **Albert** defeated **Lance Storm** ... WWF hardcore champion **Rob Van Dam** pinned **Raven** ... **Bradshaw**, **Faarooq**, & **The Undertaker** beat **The Dudley Boyz** & **Test** ... WCW U.S. champion **Chris Kanyon** beat **Billy Gunn** ... **The Hurricane** & **Ivory** defeated **Matt Hardy** & **Lita** ... WWF Intercontinental champion **Edge** pinned **Rhyno** ... WCW World champion **The Rock** beat WWF World champion **Steve Austin** by disqualification.
(09-08-01)

—Steve Drew

VIRGINIA

PENNINGTON GAP—Big Time Wrestling at the Leeman Field Fairgrounds: **Frank Parker** pinned **Denny Cooley** ... **Beau James** beat **The Iron Russian** by disqualification ... **Persephone** defeated **Corey James** in an intergender match ... **Denny Cooley** & **Beau James** beat **Frank Parker** & **Iron Russian** ... **Road Warrior Hawk** pinned **Roger Anderson**.
(09-01-01)

—C.J. Barnette

WASHINGTON

TACOMA—Pacific Wrestling Federation at the Temple Theater: **Punk Rock Prod** defeated **Randy Taylor** ... **Fender Gibson** defeated **Sloth** ... **Lewis Rach** defeated **Shoulders Torelli** ... **Nasty Nate** defeated **Dropkick Murphy** ... **Chico Alvarez** defeated **Disposable Youth** ... **Teenage Dirtbag** beat **Nikki Sixx** ... **Buddy Wayne** & **Ritchie Magnett** defeated **Mr. G.Q.** & **Zig** ... **The Mad Bomber** wrestled **Kenny Lush** to a double-countout ... **Roch Redding** & **Blaze Daily** beat International tag team champs **Pure Dominance** to win the title ... **Hollywood Studd** beat heavyweight champ **Avalanche** to win the title ... **Sadistic Sonny** defeated International heavyweight champion **Tim Flowers** to win the title.
(09-21-01)

—Neil O'Brien

WEST VIRGINIA

BERKELEY SPRINGS—Championship Pro Wrestling at the Triple B Arena: **Matthew Drew** defeated **John Balsamo** ... **Sasha** & **Tiffani Monroe** beat **Sahara** & **Flare** ... **Brock Singleton** pinned **Brian Johnson** ... **Otto Stark** & **Johnny Blast** beat **Tommy Hawk** & **Travis D** ... Heavyweight champion **Switchblade** beat **Zubov** ... **Johnny Graham** beat **Shane Shadows** in a hardcore boot camp match.
(09-08-01)

—Timothy A. Walker

HUNTINGTON—Nationwide Championship Wrestling at the Memorial Fieldhouse: **Brian Logan**, **Roger Anderson**, & **Elwood** beat **Big Bubba**, **Tony Givens**, & **Andy Douglas** ...

"Are you in pain, Kurt? What?! What?!" Yes, Angle was hurting at this point. But he's dealt with plenty of pain throughout his amateur and professional careers. He pinned Austin after using the Angle slam.

John Noble & **Killer Kurt** beat **Cuban Assassin** & **Eddie Browning** ... **Todd Morton** beat Mid-America champ **Beau James** by disqualification ... Nationwide champ **Bull Pain** beat **Demolition Ax** ... NCW/SSW tag team champions **The Batten Twins** beat **Jimmy Valiant** & **Flex Armstrong** ... **Killer Kurt** won a battle royal.
(09-07-01)

—Fay Ferguson

WISCONSIN

WAUSAU—AWA at the D.C. Everest High School: **Travis Lee** pinned **Black Dagger** ... **Rikki Noga** pinned **Conquistador** ... **The Patriot** pinned **Adrian Lynch** ... **Nick Mondo** pinned **Kujo** ... **Brad Bradley** pinned **Danny Dominion** ... **The Honky Tonk Man** beat heavyweight champ **Eric Priest** by disqualification.
(09-22-01)

—Dan Murphy

EAU CLAIRE—AAW at the Civic Center: **Trilogy** beat **Lauden Payne** ... **Switch** beat **Jason Dukes** ... **Dave Rose** beat **Ian Xavier** ... **Venom**, **Killer Claw**, & **Malice** beat **Mike Geuke**, **Mad Wolverine**, & **The Natural Man** ... **Phoenix** beat **Ashley Xavier** ... **J-Rock** defeated **Horace the Psychopath** ... **Tony DeNucci** beat **Rory Fox**.
(09-14-01)

—Nicholas Loken

BIG BEND—Mid America Wrestling at K.P. Classics: **Skullkrusher** wrestled to a draw with **Colt Cabana** ... **Farmer Vic** beat **El Astro Nuevo** ... **Adrian Serrano** beat **Rev. Axl Future** ... **Cpl. Robinson** beat **Mark Wolf** ... **Matt Longtime** & **Chuckie Smooth** won a three-way dance over **Jason Dukes** & **Frankie DeFalco** and **Kurt Krueger** (whose partner did not appear) ... **Ian Rotten** defeated **C.M. Punk**.
(09-02-01)

—Dominick Valenti

INTERNATIONAL

AUSTRALIA

SYDNEY—Australian Championship Wrestling at Fairfield RSL Club: Heavyweight champion **Blade** pinned European champion **Livewire** ... **Fever** defeated **Mad Dog Destruction** ... **High Voltage** pinned **Cougar** ... **Big T** defeated **Frank the Tank** in a tables match ... **Youngblood** wrestled **General Chaos** to a no-contest ... **Cobra Tai** & **Poison Ivy** defeated **Daddy Cool** & **Wildfire** in a best-of-three-falls match.
(09-09-01)

—Jason Conlan

CANADA

OLDCASTLE, ONTARIO—Border City Wrestling at the Ciociario Club: **Bobby Clancy** beat **Chris Sabin** ... **Gutter** beat **Derek Wylde** ... **Chris Church** & **Mike Legacy** beat **Chris Valentino** & **Brett Nikita** ... **Brian Ireland** beat **Elvis Elliott** ... **Geza Kalman Jr.** beat **Dyson Price** ... **Yukon Braxton** beat **The Hacker** ... **El Tornado** beat **Chad Collyer** ... Can-Am tag team champs **Tyson Dux** & **Jack Damage** beat **Disco Inferno** & **Terry Taylor** ... **Scott D'Amore**, **Cyrus the Virus**, **Johnny Swinger**, & **Otis Apollo** beat **Tommy Dreamer**, **Larry Destiny**, **Nova**, & **Sabu** in an elimination match ... Can-Am champion **Mikey Whipwreck** beat **Little Guido Maritato**.
(09-29-01)

—Lucy Wilken

LANGLEY, BRITISH COLUMBIA—ECCW-NWA Pacific Northwest at the ECCW House of Pain Training Centre: **Backyard Billy** defeated **China White** in a best-of-three-falls, falls-count-anywhere match ... **Michelle Starr** defeated **Raj** ... **Mike Lee** wrestled **Borriqua** to a draw ... **Sweet Daddy Devistation** pinned **Gorilla Macgilla** ... **Skag Rollins** beat **Aaron Idol** by disqualification ... NWA Pacific Northwest tag team champs **The Backwoods Militia** defeated **Michael Raines** & **Mike Lee**.
(09-08-01)

—Sean Heaslip

MONTREAL, QUEBEC—Northern Championship Wrestling at the NCW Center: Quebec champ **Piranah** beat **Nightmare** ... **Farmer Joe**, **El Guido**, & **Rush** defeated **Hot Show**, **Mikael Black**, & **Black Eagle** ... **MTH** won a three-way match against **Bishop** and **Jayzon Reaper** to win the TV title ... **Steven the Sweet Boy** defeated **Soopa** ... **Chakal** beat **Kid Rock** ... **Dream Killer** defeated **Iceman** ... **Franky the Mobster** defeated **Cobra** ... **Shock Wave** wrestled **The Vipers** to a no-contest ... **Nova Cain** defeated **Manuel Vegas**.
(09-08-01)

—Bertrand Hebert

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA—WWF at the Metro Centre: WWF light heavyweight & WCW cruiserweight champion **X-Pac** pinned **Spike Dudley** ... **Christian** defeated **Justin Credible** ... **The Hurricane** & **Ivory** defeated **Matt Hardy** & **Lita** ... **Raven** pinned **Perry Saturn** ... **Albert** pinned **Chuck Palumbo** ... **Kurt Angle** defeated **Rhyno** ... WWF Intercontinental champion **Edge** defeated **Lance Storm** ... WCW U.S. champion **Chris Kanyon** pinned **Jeff Hardy** ... **Chris Jericho** pinned WWF hardcore champion **Rob Van Dam** in a non-title match ... **Bradshaw**, **Faarooq**, & **The Undertaker** beat **The Dudley Boyz** & **Test**.
(09-02-01)

—Brent Scanlan

ENGLAND

LEEDS—HWF at the HWF Arena: **Hammer Jandu** beat **Harry Hell** ... **2 Xtreme** beat **The Lightning Kid** ... **Kid Test** beat **Andrew Rakaha** in a loser-leaves-HWF match ... Tag team champs **Hell's Fury** beat **Riot Squad** ... **King Regenald** beat **Dangerous Dave** in a ladder match ... Heavyweight champ **Hardcore Hero** defeated **Wild Will** ... **Hardcore Hero**, **Kez**, **Kid Test**, **Hell's Fury**, & **Castaway** beat **Hammer Jandu**, **2 Xtreme**, & **The Streetfighters** in a hardcore match.
(09-15-01)

—Pat Bentley

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED

CLASSIC

From the June 1991 issue

Pro Wrestling Illustrated Classic!

CACTUS JACK:

No Regard For His Opponents–And Even Less For Himself!

He's wild and wacky, but, most of all, Cactus Jack is also downright frightening. All he cares about is destroying his unfortunate opponents–even if he destroys his own body in the process!

Here's a sight that was hardly uncommon in 1991: After delivering a flying elbowsmash off the top rope, Cactus ends up in the crowd. This time he is in the VIP section, no less!

By Bob Smith

HE MANAGED TO absorb the blows, but young Mike Williams still can't believe it really happened. All he can remember is the savage ferocity that rained down upon his battered body for six terrifying minutes.

"I've faced a lot of rulebreakers, but I've never seen *anything* like this guy," said Williams, wincing as a doctor applied tape to his badly bruised ribs. "Other guys have tried to hurt me before, but I've never met a guy that tried to hurt *himself* at the same time. Believe me, I never want to get in the ring with that maniac again."

The sight of a little blood—his opponent's, his own, or both—never bothered Cactus Jack. He seems to thoroughly enjoy putting scars on the bodies of others as well as putting them on his own.

Such is the way of Cactus Jack, who is quickly becoming a cult hero of sorts. In fact, at a recent UWF television taping in New York, the maniacal native of Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, received more cheers than all but the most popular fan favorites!

"I appreciate a guy who takes risks," said Todd Menking of Brooklyn after the card. "Did you see what Jack did to that guy in the ring tonight? He busted that guy up pretty bad, but I'll bet he did even more damage to himself. I'm just waiting for Jack to be carried out on a stretcher after he *wins!*"

The prospect of that happening is more likely than one might think. In his match against Williams, Jack was completely undisciplined—and devastatingly brutal—with his sadistic offensive

PWI RATINGS June 1991

TOP 10

1. Ric Flair
2. Lex Luger
3. Sting
4. Curt Hennig
5. Hulk Hogan
6. Sgt. Slaughter
7. The Ultimate Warrior
8. Roddy Piper
9. Bill Dundee
10. Hacksaw Duggan

Roddy Piper

TAG TEAMS

1. The Hart Foundation
2. Doom
3. Rick & Scott Steiner
4. Arn Anderson & Barry Windham
5. The Nasty Boys
6. The Legion of Doom
7. The Freebirds
8. Power & Glory
9. Jeff Jarrett & Jerry Lawler
10. Brad Anderson & The Hood

NWA

World champion: Ric Flair

1. Lex Luger
2. Sting
3. Sid Vicious
4. Arn Anderson
5. Terry Taylor
6. Stan Hansen
7. El Gigante
8. Bobby Eaton
9. Tom Zenk
10. Dan Spivey

WWF

World champion: Sgt. Slaughter

1. Curt Hennig
2. Hulk Hogan
3. The Ultimate Warrior
4. Hacksaw Duggan
5. Roddy Piper
6. The Undertaker
7. Earthquake
8. Big Bossman
9. Davey Boy Smith
10. Kerry Von Erich

USWA

Heavyweight champion: Terry Funk

1. Bill Dundee
2. Jeff Jarrett
3. Jerry Lawler
4. Dan Davis
5. Eric Embry
6. Gary Young
7. Curtis Thompson
8. Tom Prichard
9. Tony Anthony
10. Awesome Kong

MOST POPULAR

1. Hulk Hogan
2. Lex Luger
3. Sting
4. The Ultimate Warrior
5. Scott Steiner
6. Jerry Lawler
7. Roddy Piper
8. Rick Steiner
9. Steve Doll
10. B. Brian Blair

MOST HATED

1. Sgt. Slaughter
2. Ric Flair
3. Sid Vicious
4. Curt Hennig
5. Arn Anderson
6. The Undertaker
7. Terry Taylor
8. Earthquake
9. Rick Martel
10. The Hood

tactics. Totally ignoring referee Jesse Hernandez' instructions, Jack tore at Williams with a flurry of fists and eye-gouges—and even bit him!

"A win ain't no win unless I disable the guy," said the gap-toothed Jack with a sinister grin. "Anybody can cop a pinfall. I'm not happy until the guy is lying there motionless, unable to fight back. Man, that feels better than *anything* else. *Yeah!*"

Jack was satiated after this match. As Williams slumped against the ropes, Jack ran at him at full speed and clotheslined him over the top strand. An ordinary maneuver, but not the way Jack does it: Cactus ran at Williams with such speed that he propelled *himself* over the top rope as well. When Jack landed, he banged his right forearm hard against the concrete floor. Despite his obvious pain, Jack came up sporting a deranged smile.

The barbarism didn't end there. Cacktus Jack ran out of the ring and slammed Williams on the arena floor. He returned to the ring apron and sprung five feet down and six feet out to hammer Williams with an awesome flying elbowsmash. Ten seconds later, Williams was counted out, mercifully ending the carnage—for both men.

"Jack's going to break a hip or shoulder if he keeps this up," said UWF commentator Craig DeGeorge. "I've seen all of Jack's recent matches, and he's taken serious risks in every one. Once I saw him climb to the top turnbuckle and fall *backward* onto his opponent, who was outside the ring! A lot of wrestlers are a little strange, but Jack ... well, let's just say he's seriously disturbed."

Even other rulebreakers believe that Jack is more than a little skewed. Kevin Sullivan, who managed Jack in the NWA for several months in 1989, admits he dropped

Yes, the thought of wrestling a madman like Jack had to be a bit frightening to anyone (left). Cactus figured at one point that it wouldn't be a bad idea to find out what it was like to be in the back of an ambulance (above).

Jack from his stable because the hulking 6'4", 247-pounder refused to stop taking chances during his matches.

"One time, Mike Rotundo slammed Jack's head into the ringpost," recalled Sullivan. "Jack fell back with a big cut running across his forehead. But he just stood up, wiped the blood off his head, and rammed *his own head* in the post *five more times.* Insanity! I really think he enjoys feeling pain more than he does winning matches."

Jack doesn't seem to care what his contemporaries think of him.

Anyone willing to tangle with Cactus in a barbed-wire match either had to be incredibly courageous or incredibly foolish. Perhaps both!

"Sullivan mismanaged my career for too long," insisted Jack, grinning. "Everybody talks about how talented I am, but I never won a championship under Kevin, so he's full of it. He's just jealous 'cause I used to show him up all the time. I'm not afraid to get hurt. In fact, I *like* pain. And the more pain I feel when I execute one of my flying moves, the more I know it hurt the other guy. Besides, I show off more incredible moves than just about anybody."

Jack's violent nature has made it difficult for him to find opponents. In fact, one of the more persistent UWF rumors of late is that several wrestlers have petitioned UWF President Herb Abrams, requesting that Jack be banned from the federation.

"That's misguided thinking," counters UWF wrestler Bob Orton. "Jack really isn't breaking the rules more than anyone else. I admire the guy—kind of. But look, the damn fool is going to kill himself one of these days."

It's unlikely that Jack will back off from his weird penchant for self-inflicted torture anytime soon. In fact, Jack claims that one of these days, he's going to execute the ultimate maneuver, an act so daring that no one will ever be able to top it.

"I have a dream," said Jack, his eyes darting about. "I'm wrestlin' at the Penta Hotel, and I beat up some guy so bad he can't move. *Ha!* Then I climb ... no, not to the top turnbuckle ... to the *balcony.* That's more than 100 feet in the air, right? I climb up on the railing, and I dive off, fly in the air, and I land right on the guy. The ring collapses with me on top of the bum for the pin. Man, *nobody* will have ever seen *anything* like it! They'd call it the greatest move ever—even if they had to cart me away on a stretcher!"

With a smile on his face, no doubt. □

PWI, June 1991

The cover: This was the one of the more unusual covers in *PWI's* history. Hulk Hogan was the man featured (no surprise), but there was no *photo* of the "Hulkster." Instead we used a painting by William Robert Laird that depicted him as America's hero. With the U.S. involved in the Persian Gulf War in '91, Hogan visited various American military bases to let military personnel and their families know that they had the full support of their country.

The centerfold: Who more than Hacksaw Duggan deserved to be in the centerfold during a time in which Americans were in need of patriotic heroes? Turncoat Sgt. Slaughter was the most despised man in wrestling at the time, and Duggan was right there alongside Hogan battling the World champ. He managed to score several countout and DQ wins over Slaughter but never beat him for the title.

Money Talks: An extensive investigation by the *PWI* staff revealed that Ric Flair was paying other members of The Four Horsemen large bonuses to protect him and to help him keep the NWA World title. What we were stunned to learn was that Barry Windham's 1990 bonus was $75,000, Arn Anderson's was $85,000, and newest member Sid Vicious' was a whopping $1-million. No wonder Sid seemed to be in no hurry to pursue the NWA title himself.

Before He Was "Pumped": A rather soft-spoken—almost humble—Scott Steiner spoke out in "Press Conference." He discussed, among other things, his recent near-victory over Ric Flair for the NWA World title and rumors that he might ditch brother Rick and wrestle singles full-time. Here's one quote about Scott's brother that we'd never hear from the 2000 version of Scott Steiner: "I realize what Rick did is against the rules, and I'm sorry about that."

Nasty-ness In The WWF: Hawk and Animal—The Legion of Doom—were not in good spirits at all. The former AWA and NWA world tag champs had recently jumped to the WWF and were not doing as well as they expected. Meanwhile, their old rivals The Nasty Boys were excelling, and speculation was that the LOD would take out their frustrations on Sags and Knobs. Six months after the issue went to press, the LOD beat the Nastys for the WWF tag belts.

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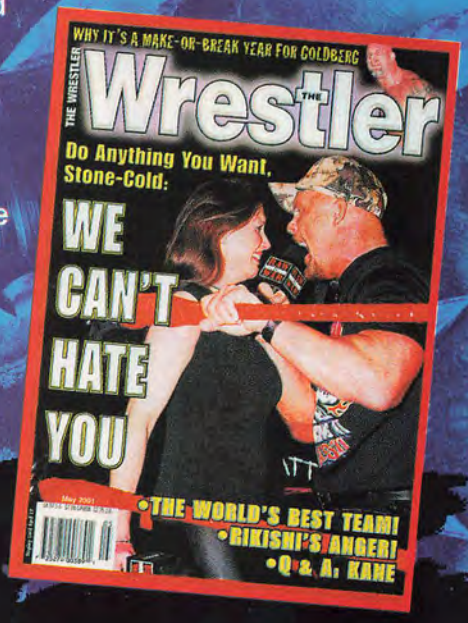

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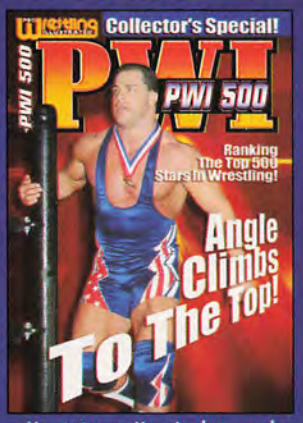
IS IT TRUE?



Yes, it *is* true. Kurt Angle is number one in the 2001 "*PWI* 500." Of course as the top guy, he made the cover of the December 2001 issue of *PWI*. We always get as much feedback as we can handle on the "500." This year was certainly no different, although Angle was a pretty popular choice among readers.

"You don't realize how great a year Angle had until you look back on it closely like you guys did," wrote Sam Weidman of South Bend, Indiana. "I was thinking Austin would get it again, but now I'm convinced Angle deserved it."

"Steve Austin never gets the credit he should get," e-mailed Paul Prince of San Juan, Puerto Rico. "When's the last time we saw someone hold the WWF title this long? I think you have to go back to Shawn Michaels. And Austin's only number two? That's wrong."

"I thought the '500' was extremely well-done as usual," wrote Perry Nevin of Sunbury, Pennsylvania. "My only problem with it was some WCW guys were too high. Scott Steiner hasn't wrestled once since March. He didn't belong in the top 10."

LIFE MUST GO ON

An open letter to Vince McMahon …

Dear Mr. McMahon:

I applaud you for airing *Smackdown* on September 13. You stated that we would not live our lives in fear and you were right. I think this was needed so that we could have something to smile and laugh about when there was nothing to smile and laugh about. It was also nice to see the real people behind the wrestlers' personae that night.

Your opening speech on *Smackdown* and some of the wrestlers' remarks moved me to tears as I thought about all the victims of the terrorist attacks, their families, and what they must be going through. I have donated money and done what I can to help. This was one night when wrestling didn't matter; it was all about the spirit of America. You stepped up at a time when our country was in pain. Critics be damned. You and the rest of the WWF deserve to be commended.

I have been a WWF fan for 15 years, and nothing has ever moved me like this tribute to America. I hope next time they come down on you, people will remember what the WWF did in our hour of need. This show lasted only two hours, but those were two hours that helped to heal America's pain. May God bless you, your family, and the rest of the WWF in all you do. Some may feel that *Smackdown* was insignificant, but I feel it went a long way to show what a brave and proud country we are.

ROBERT SCHUSCHU
schubag28@hotmail.com

MORE ON THE LADIES

I really had a blast rating all the gorgeous women of wrestling (*PWI Presents: Women Of Wrestling*, Fall 2001). It sure was a chal-

This picture of Stacy Keibler is for reader Harold Vandruska, who rates the Alliance diva as not only the hottest woman in wrestling, but one of the most beautiful in the world.

lenge with so many beautiful ladies. With all those lovely females to choose from, I felt that Stacy Keibler was *by far* the most beautiful woman in wrestling history. In fact, I would rate her as one of the most beautiful women in the world. Definitely in a class by herself.

Keep up the good work with your fantastic photos and magazine. I am looking forward to seeing the final results of the voting on the 100 most beautiful women in the sport.

HAROLD VONDRUSKA
Mishicot, WI

WORTHWHILE WAIT

What I want to know is why did it take the WWF so long to recognize what a phenomenal talent Rob Van Dam is? They had him on *Raw* a few years ago and they must not have liked his attitude, because he stayed in ECW. When ECW went under and WCW was sold to the WWF, I figured RVD would be the first free agent the WWF would bring in. I wondered what Vince McMahon was waiting for when Van Dam didn't show up.

But RVD has finally arrived, and I guess every former diehard ECW fan (including me) can be happy about it. He's still young and should have plenty of great years in the WWF ahead of him. RVD has a shot at being as popular as Steve Austin someday. I'm hoping the WWF gives us Austin vs. Van Dam at next year's WrestleMania.

JOHN FREDERICKS
Browns Mills, NJ

☎COMMON SENSE

Please someone tell me that no wrestling promoter will be stupid enough to try to capitalize on the tragedy that hit America on September 11 and create a terrorist character based on Osama bin Laden. And please tell me Vince McMahon realizes how stupid it was to turn Sgt. Slaughter against our country during the Gulf War and won't do anything like that now.

RICK GREENWELL
Valley Park, MS

TIME IS RIGHT

I hope now that Jerry Lawler and Stacy Carter have broken up that Vince McMahon will bring Lawler back to the WWF. I don't think Paul Heyman is a great announcer, and I think Jim Ross is much better with Lawler, because he obviously enjoys working with "The King." Heyman should be in the ring leading the Alliance while Lawler is back where he belongs.

JANE NEILL
Carbondale, IL

MIKE AVERAGE?

I can't remember seeing any wrestler's stock fall as fast as Mike Awesome's has in a little more than a year. In the spring of 2000, he was the ECW World champion, and it didn't look like anybody in ECW was tough enough to stop him. Maybe Rob Van Dam, but that match never did happen.

Mike Awesome hasn't been in the ring with top WWF stars such as Chris Jericho recently. He's struggled just to get on TV. Eddie Clayton misses seeing the Awesome who dominated ECW.

Then he went to WCW and the creative team there tried to make him a comedian with bad gimmick after bad gimmick. At least he was an important player, though.

Now the only time I see him on WWF TV is when the entire Alliance comes out together. It's too bad, because I really used to love watching him against Masato Tanaka and Spike Dudley in ECW. What happened?

EDDIE CLAYTON
Gilbert, SC

SHAKESPEARE 2001

I thought the story (if you can call it that) by *Hamlet* Burkett in the November issue ("Wherefore Art Thou, Spike-eo? Will Romeo & Juliet 2001 End In Tragedy?") was one of the funniest things you guys have ever done! I can only guess how long it took to put this whole thing together. It's too bad the Spike and Molly Holly story is petering out, because it was great watching them together on TV. Maybe the whole thing just didn't have enough WWF Attitude.

MICHELLE MENDENHALL
Oakland, CA □

PWI HOTLINE EXTRA!

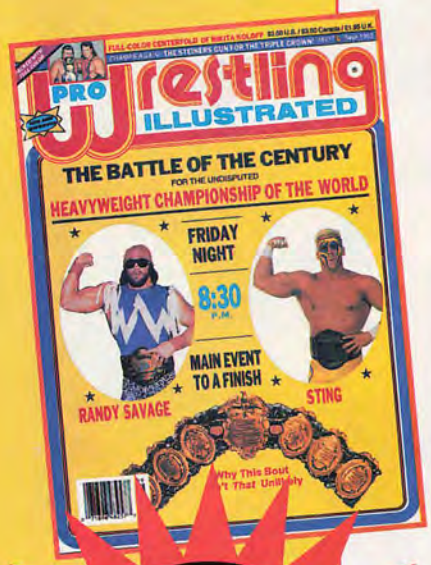
YOUR ANSWERS TO OUR QUESTION OF THE WEEK!

Question of the Week: Should the ECW title be reactivated in the WWF? (September 25 to October 1, 2001)

Hotline callers respond: "I'd rather see some titles dropped, like the WCW U.S. belt and the WWF European belt," responded Bill Branch of Knoxville, Tennessee. "They got way too many belts to even think about putting another one out there."

"I think if they had a tournament for the ECW belt, people would really like it," said Jerry Duckworth of Pittsburgh. "Keep the ECW title, the WWF title, the WCW title, and one tag team title, then get rid of the rest of them."

"I think maybe if you threw the ECW belt in there, then had the WWF champion vs. the WCW champion vs. the ECW champ in a three-way dance at WrestleMania, you'd have something special," said Ed Lynn of Detroit. "Whoever won would be the undisputed unified champion."



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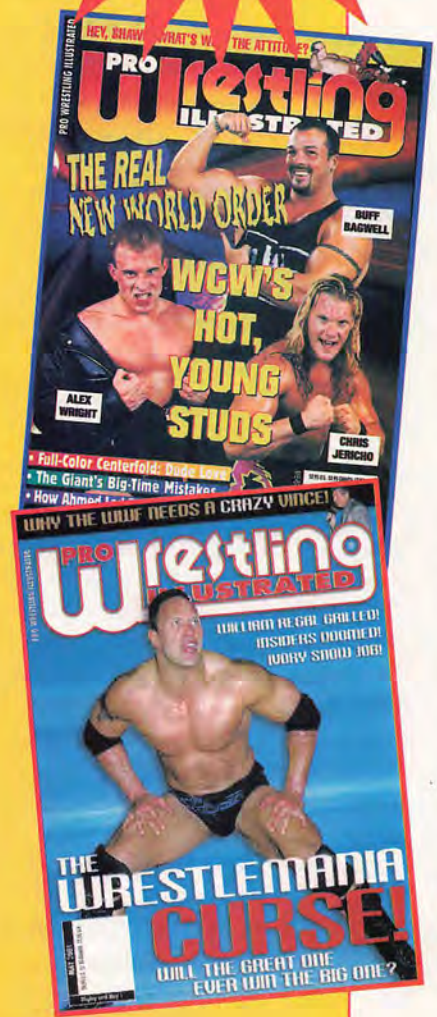
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WILL THE GREAT ONE EVER WIN THE BIG ONE?

April 1985: Jimmy Snuka: "I Want Piper!"—Even If It Kills The Tonga Kid. Centerfold: Ronnie Garvin. Plus: Flair-Rhodes, Terry Gordy, Jim Garvin, Road Warriors.

June 1985: Super Dream Contest: Play Dusty Rhodes' Trivia Game And Win His Boots! Centerfold: Barry Windham. Plus: Flair-Kerry, Fabulous Ones-Road Warriors, Hogan-Volkoff, Magnum T.A.

June 1988: Is The End Near For Hulk Hogan? Centerfold: Tully Blanchard. Plus: Midnight Rockers-Kelly & Kiniski, Al Perez, Dusty Rhodes, Magnificent Muraco.

January 1990: Warrior's Next Victim: Hulk Hogan? Centerfold: Sid Vicious. Plus: Kerry Von Erich, Jim Ross, Midnight Express.

February 1990: Luger's Holiday Gift For Flair: Has The "Total Package" Wrapped Up The NWA Title? Centerfold: Bret Hart. Plus: Hulk Hogan, Woman, Hennig-Beefcake, Toni Adams.

May 1990: Hulk Hogan: Primed And Ready For WrestleMania VI. Centerfold: Great Muta. Plus: Piper-Rude, Eric Embry, Rock 'n' Rolls, Sid Vicious, pain.

July 1990: The Maturing Of Lex Luger: The "Total Package" Becomes The People's Choice. Centerfold: Rick Martel. Plus: Skyscrapers, Bobby Heenan, Mr. Saito, referees.

September 1990: The Hulkster's Wrath: 7,000 Miles To Violent Redemption. Centerfold: The Steiners. Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Sting, Destruction Crew, Four Horsemen, Curt Hennig.

October 1990: Sting's Painful Lesson: You'll Have No Friends At The Top. Centerfold: Brutus Beefcake. Plus: Orndorff-Blanchard, Tugboat, Teddy Long, Ultimate Warrior, Road Warriors.

February 1991: WrestleMania VII Contest. Centerfold: 1991 calendar. Plus: Sid Vicious, DiBiase-Rhodes, Scott Steiner, Power & Glory, Terry Funk.

March 1991 (Special Issue): 1990—The Year In Wrestling. 1990 In Review, Achievement '90 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 1991.

April 1991: Sgt. Slaughter Guilty Of Treason! Centerfold: Tom Zenk. Plus: Sting, Magnum T.A., Jesse Ventura, Lawler-Gilbert, Hogan & Warrior.

June 1991: Hulk Hogan: America's Hero. Centerfold: Hacksaw Duggan. Plus: Cactus Jack, Ric Flair, Nasty Boys, Steiners, Simmons-Reed.

July 1991: The War Is Over! Hulk Hogan Liberates The WWF Belt From Sgt. Slaughter! Centerfold: Brian Pillman. Plus: Horsemen, Lex Luger, Eric Embry, Demolition.

August 1991 (Special Issue): Supercards '91. Centerfold: Hulk Hogan. Plus: WrestleMania VII, WCW-New Japan, Ultimate Warrior, Owen Hart, Koloff-Luger.

October 1991: Sid Justice: The Second Coming Of Hulk Hogan. Centerfold: Lex Luger. Plus: Hogan-Slaughter, Terrence Taylor, Barry Windham, Williams-Bigelow.

November 1991: Your Wedding Gift For Savage & Elizabeth: Help Lift The "Macho Man's" Suspension! Centerfold: Bobby Eaton. Plus: Tito Santana, Bushwhackers, Jushin Liger, Brian Pillman.

January 1992: Ric Flair: He'll Make Hulk Hogan Look Like An Amateur. Centerfold: Ron Simmons. Plus: Rick Steiner, Ultimate Warrior, Lex Luger.

February 1992: Has Hulk Hogan Had Enough? Centerfold: 1992 calendar. Plus: Sting, Justice-Roberts, hot prospects, Eddie Gilbert.

May 1992: Revitalized In Tokyo: Hulk Hogan Is Super-Psyched For WrestleMania VII! Centerfold: Rick Rude. Plus: Sting & Muta-Steiners, Jarrett & Fuller, Lightning Kid, Randy Savage, intimidation.

June 1992: Exclusive *PWI* Interview: Roddy Piper Speaks Out! Centerfold: Dustin Rhodes. Plus: Dangerously-Sting, Abdullah-Cactus, Sid Justice, Randy Savage.

July 1992: The Best Of The Best—The Masters Of Their Craft. Centerfold: Randy Savage. Plus: Liger-Pillman, Jim Neidhart, U.S.-Japan, Ric Flair.

September 1992: Savage vs. Sting: Why It Isn't That Unlikely. Centerfold: Nikita Koloff. Plus: Steiners, Barry Windham, Sid Justice, Hodge & Weston, Shawn Michaels.

October 1992: The Hatred Still Runs Deep: Ultimate Warrior vs. Randy Savage—They'll Settle Up At SummerSlam! Centerfold: Cactus Jack. Plus: Steve Williams, Tom Zenk, WWF title controversy, fire match, Eric Embry.

November 1992: The British Bulldog: Hounding The Hitman. Centerfold: Ultimate Warrior. Plus: Honky Tonk Man, Steiners, Undertaker, Madusa, perfect wrestler.

February 1993: No One Can Cut Down Razor Ramon. Centerfold: Curt Hennig. Plus: Jake Roberts, Pillman-Dustin, Ric Flair-Road Warriors, Rick Rude, Snuka-Muraco.

May 1993: WrestleMania Without Hulk Hogan? Centerfold: The Undertaker. Plus: Ron Simmons, Cactus Jack, Madusa-Sherri, WCW-New Japan, Ultimate Warrior.

April 1996: WCW World Title Turmoil. Centerfold: The Kid. Plus: Hulk Hogan, Ahmed Johnson, Bob Armstrong, Michaels-Bret, Public Enemy.

May 1996: Un-Natural! The WWF Has Finally Gone Too Far! Centerfold: Public Enemy. Plus: Jeff Jarrett, Dreamer-Raven, Dan Severn, Ric Flair, Giant.

October 1996: Peaking Too Soon: Will The Giant Be Ruined By His Own Success? Centerfold: Goldust. Plus: Big Van Vader, Ric Flair, Bulldog, Lex Luger.

Winter 1996 (Special Issue): *PWI* 500. Centerfold: Shawn Michaels.

February 1997: Mr. Perfect: "Shawn Michaels Stole My Life." Centerfold: "Psycho" Sid. Plus:

Kroffat & Furnas, Vince McMahon, Randy Savage, New Razor & New Diesel.

April 1997: How Winning The Title Saved Psycho Sid's Sanity. Centerfold: Hulk Hogan. Plus: Rocky Maivia, Jeff Jarrett, Unofficial/Officials, Chris Jericho.

February 1998: Sting vs. Hogan—The Match Of The Century! Centerfold: Hogan vs. Sting fight poster. Plus: 16-page Starrcade preview, Perry Saturn, Dude Love.

March 1998 (Special Issue): 1997—The Year In Wrestling. 1997 In Review, Achievement '97 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 1998.

April 1998: The DeGeneration X Debate: Will It Save Or Ruin The WWF? Centerfold: Ken Shamrock. Plus: Bret Hart, Undertaker-Kane, Melanie Pillman.

May 1998: Starrcade Scandal! We Hate To Say It ... But Give The Belt Back To Hogan: Centerfold: Ric Flair. Plus: Mero & Sable, Taz, Taka Michinoku.

June 1998 (Special Issue): The 1998 PWI Poll. Centerfold: Steve Austin. Plus: Sabu, Lex Luger, Sting, Rocky Maivia, Bill Goldberg.

July 1998: WWF vs. WCW: Which Is Better? Centerfold: Benoit, Bill Goldberg, Ahmed Johnson.

October 1998: Bret Screws Bret, Part II. Centerfold: Hunter Hearst Helmsley. Plus: Jim Ross, Marcus Bagwell, WWF controversy, FBI.

December 1998: Gold Rush! Get Ready For The Most Awesome WCW Title Reign Ever! Centerfold: Undertaker. Plus: The Giant, Vader, Guerreros, Ken Shamrock.

Holiday 1998 (100-Page Special Issue): *PWI* 500. Eighth Annual Special.

January 1999: No Evil! Can Today's Fans Accept The Warrior's Creed? Centerfold: Chyna. Plus: Sting, Bill Goldberg, Summerslam.

March 1999 (100-Page Special Issue): 1998—The Year In Wrestling. 1998 In Review, Achievement '98 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 1999.

April 1999: The Crock! The Title Change That Screwed The World! Centerfold: Chris Jericho. Plus: Bill Goldberg, Tommy Dreamer, Booker T, more Unofficial/Officials.

May 1999: Who Holds The Key To WrestleMania XV? Centerfold: Konnan. Plus: Mark Henry, Sting-Nash, Bill Alfonso, Brian Hildebrand.

June 1999: (100-Page Special Issue): The 1999 *PWI* Poll. Plus: Mankind, Flair & Turner, VMac, Steiners, New Japan-UFO.

July 1999: Warning! This Team Will Self-Destruct In 15 Seconds! Centerfold: X-Pac. Plus: New Jack-Dudleys, Jesse James, Venis & Godfather, Sting-Bischoff-Flair.

August 1999: (100-Page Special Issue): Supercards '99: WWF WrestleMania, WCW Uncensored, ECW Living Dangerously. Plus: Super 8, Bam Bam Bigelow, Jerry Lawler, tag team wrestling.

September 1999: Why Stone-Cold Might Get Out While He's Still On Top! Centerfold: Sting. Plus: Kidman & Misterio, The Rock, Bret Hart, Taz-Sabu.

October 1999: Why The World Must Fear Scott Steiner, By Buff Bagwell. Centerfold: Mankind. Plus: Kane & X-Pac, The Godfather, Perry Saturn, 20th anniversary readers' poll.

November 1999: The Women Of The WWF: There's More To Their Power Than Their Looks. Centerfold: Owen Hart. Plus: Rey Misterio Jr., Roddy Piper, Steiners, Steve Austin.

December 1999: Steve Austin: "CEO This! I'm The Damn Champ!" Centerfold: Rey Misterio Jr. Plus: Randy Savage, Jimmy Hart, WCW youth, Billy Gunn.

Holiday 1999 (100-Page Special Issue): *PWI* 500. Ninth Annual Special.

January 2000: The Millennium Man Mouths Off! An Unforgettable Hour With Chris Jericho! Centerfold: Taz. Plus: Chris Benoit, Sid-Goldberg, Triple-H.

February 2000: The Master Manipulator! How Stone-Cold Controls The WWF. Centerfold: Kane. Plus: Paul Heyman, Hogan-Bret-Sting-Luger.

March 2000 (100-Page Special Issue): 1999—The Year In Wrestling. 1999 In Review, Achievement '99 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 2000.

April 2000: The Rock vs. Stone-Cold: Let's Settle It At WrestleMania. Centerfold: Chris Benoit. Plus: DDP, Goldberg-Sid, more Unofficial/Officials.

May 2000 (100-Page Special Issue): The Y2K *PWI* Poll. Plus: Mitsuharu Misawa, Triple-H, Bret Hart, Hollys, Chyna & Aysa, ECW returnees.

June 2000: Just Wondering, Steph ... Is Triple-H Worth Your Billion-Dollar Inheritance? Centerfold: The Rock. Plus: Heyman-Van Dam, Vader, NWO.

July 2000: Call It A Wrap, Jack! You've Done Your Share ... Go Home! Centerfold: Sid Vicious. Plus: Dusty Rhodes, Disco Inferno, DDP, Dudleys-Hardys.

August 2000 (100-Page Special Issue): Supercards 2000: WWF WrestleMania, WCW Uncensored, ECW Living Dangerously. Plus: Rob Van Dam, greatest supercards, Super 8.

September 2000: Wrestle McMania! Why The Peace Can't Last. Centerfold: Jeff Jarrett. Plus: Eric Bischoff, Dudleys, Raven.

October 2000: Scott Steiner: The Superstars The WWF Let Slip Away: Centerfold: Rikishi. Plus: Shawn Michaels, Austin-Rock, Rhino-RVD.

November 2000: The Rock vs. Triple-H. Our Special 50-Category Analysis. Pinups: Extreme wrestling. Plus: Nash-Steiner-Hall, Hardcore Holly, wrestling too extreme?

December 2000: Head Hog! Does Undertaker Have Enough Gas In His Tank To Rumble To The Top? Centerfold: Dallas Page. Plus: Kurt Angle, Rikishi, Vampiro-Sting, Japan.

[FULL-COLOR BEGINNING WITH HOLIDAY 2000]

Holiday 2000 (116-Page Special): *PWI* 500. Includes: The editors' views, a look back at 1991's top 25, Achievement 2000 ballot.

January 2001: Who Does He Really Hate? Someone Will Pay For Austin's Pain! Plus: Steven Richards, Justin Credible, Gordon Solie, Jeff Jarrett, Arn-Sid.

February 2001 (116-Page Special): The State Of The Game. Includes: The states of the WWF, WCW, ECW, independents, international, the business, the art.

March 2001: Hulk Hogan: WWF Fans Want Him Back! Plus: Mike Awesome, Rikishi, Jerry Lynn, Elix Skipper, Triple-H.

April 2001 (116-Page Special): 2000—The Year In Wrestling. 2000 In Review, Achievement 2000 awards, Unofficial/Official awards, Predictions for 2001.

May 2001: The WrestleMania Curse! Will The Great One Ever Win The Big One? Plus: Vince McMahon, William Regal, Page & Nash, Ivory, Lance Storm, ECW.

June 2001 (116-Page Special): The 2001 *PWI* Poll. Plus: Ric Flair, Chyna, Steve Austin.

July 2001: Women's Work! It Ain't What It Used To Be! Plus: Dudleys, Chavo Guerrero Jr., Justin Credible, Francine, Scott Steiner.

August 2001 (116-Page Special): Supercards 2001: WrestleMania X-Seven, WCW Night of Champions, Super 8. Plus: Big Show, Kane, Jeff Jarrett, Tommy Dreamer.

September 2001: WWF-WCW: The 10 Questions That Must Be Answered. Plus: Triple-H, Stacy Keibler, Paul Heyman, Matt Hardy.

October 2001 (116-Page Special): Mid-Year Report: Top 50 stories, grades, half-year awards, predictions. Plus: Perry Saturn, Dallas Page, Terri.

November 2001: A Crying Shane: He Paid The Price To Purchase WCW ... Is He Willing To Pay The Price To Keep It? Plus: DDP-Kimberly, Edge, Molly-Spike, Tajiri, Rob Van Dam, Mick Foley, Florida indies.

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☐ FEB 92	☐ JUL 98	☐ MAY 00	
☐ MAY 92	☐ OCT 98	☐ JUN 00	

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PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED

TOP 10

1. **THE ROCK**
   272, Miami, FL
   (2) WCW World champion
2. **KURT ANGLE**
   233, Pittsburgh, PA
   (1) No. 2 contender: WWF World title
3. **KEIJI MUTO**
   245, Yamanashi, Japan
   (5) All-Japan Triple Crown champion
4. **STEVE AUSTIN**
   252, Victoria, TX
   (4) WWF World champion
5. **JUN AKIYAMA**
   225, Hiroshima, Japan
   (8) GHC heavyweight champion
6. **ROB VAN DAM**
   237, Battle Creek, MI
   (3) WWF hardcore champion
7. **CHRISTIAN**
   225, Toronto, Ontario
   (-) WWF Intercontinental champion
8. **KAZUYUKI FUJITA**
   253, Funabashi, Japan
   (-) IWGP heavyweight champion
9. **RHYNO**
   275, Detroit, MI
   (-) WCW U.S. champion
10. **CHRIS JERICHO**
    225, Winnipeg, Manitoba
    (9) No. 3 contender: WWF World title

Rhyno

TAG TEAMS

1. **BUH BUH RAY & D-VON DUDLEY**
   Combined weight: 585 pounds
   (2) WWF World tag team champions
2. **JEFF & MATT HARDY**
   Combined weight: 422 pounds
   (5) WCW World tag team champions
3. **TATSUMI FUJINAMI & OSAMU NISHIMURA**
   Combined weight: 459 pounds
   (-) IWGP International tag team champions
4. **BOOKER T & TEST**
   Combined weight: 532 pounds
   (-) No. 1 contenders: WWF & WCW tag titles
5. **KANE & THE UNDERTAKER**
   Combined weight: 673 pounds
   (1) No. 2 contenders: WWF & WCW tag titles
6. **YUJI ANJYO & GENICHIRO TENRYU**
   Combined weight: 473 pounds
   (6) All-Japan International tag team champions
7. **THE BIG SHOW & SPIKE DUDLEY**
   Combined weight: 627 pounds
   (-) No. 3 contenders: WWF & WCW tag titles
8. **THE HURRICANE & LANCE STORM**
   Combined weight: 441 pounds
   (7) No. 4 contenders: WWF & WCW tag titles
9. **BRADSHAW & FAAROOQ**
   Combined weight: 599 pounds
   (4) No. 5 contenders: WWF & WCW tag titles
10. **MITSUHARU MISAWA & YOSHINARI OGAWA**
    Combined weight: 430 pounds
    (-) No. 1 contenders: GHC tag title

WWF

World Champion:
STEVE AUSTIN
(C) 252, Victoria, TX

1—CHRISTIAN
(6) 225, Toronto, Ontario
2—KURT ANGLE
(2) 233, Pittsburgh, PA
3—CHRIS JERICHO
(4) 225, Winnipeg, Manitoba
4—EDGE
(1) 240, Toronto, Ontario
5—THE UNDERTAKER
(7) 304, Dallas, TX
6—TAJIRI
(5) 213, Tokyo, Japan
7—KANE
(–) 345, parts unknown
8—X-PAC
(–) 221, Minneapolis, MN
9—THE BIG SHOW
(–) 472, Aiken, SC
10—BRADSHAW
(–) 309, Roscoe, TX

WCW/ECW

World Champion:
THE ROCK
(C) 272, Miami, FL

1—RHYNO
(6) 275, Detroit, MI
2—ROB VAN DAM
(3) 237, Battle Creek, MI
3—BOOKER T
(2) 250, Houston, TX
4—TEST
(7) 282, Toronto, Ontario
5—THE HURRICANE
(5) 210, Raleigh, NC
6—LANCE STORM
(9) 231, Calgary, Alberta
7—TAZZ
(10) 248, Red Hook, NY
8—RAVEN
(–) 243, Short Hills, NJ
9—CHRIS KANYON
(4) 245, Queens, NY
10—MIKE AWESOME
(–) 285, Tampa, FL

NWA

NWA Champion:
STEVE CORINO
(C) 219, Sea Isle City, NJ

1—KEVIN NORTHCUTT
(2) 348, Chalmette, LA
2—ICEMAN BUCK Q
(3) 225, Tampa, FL
3—MIKE SAMSON
(5) 220, Brooklyn, NY
4—HOTSTUFF HERNANDEZ
(4) 280, Houston, TX
5—DR. LUTHER
(6) 245, Calgary, Alberta
6—MAGNUM
(8) 227, Wellston, OH
7—BRANDON K
(9) 202, Dunbar, PA
8—JOHNNY ALLBLACK
(10) 254, Honolulu, HI
9—TOM BRANDI
(–) 248, Norristown, PA
10—PRINCE JUSTICE
(7) 320, Cincinnati, OH

NEW JAPAN

IWGP Champion:
KAZUYUKI FUJITA
(C) 253, Funabashi, Japan

1—DON FRYE
(–) 231, Sierra Vista, AZ
2—YUJI NAGATA
(1) 228, Tokyo, Japan
3—KEIJI MUTO
(2) 245, Yamanashi, Japan
4—MASA CHONO
(5) 235, Tokyo, Japan
5—HIROYOSHI TENZAN
(4) 270, Tokyo, Japan
6—MANABU NAKANISHI
(3) 235, Tokyo, Japan
7—SATOSHI KOJIMA
(9) 223, Tokyo, Japan
8—TADAO YASUDA
(6) 310, Tokyo, Japan
9—JUSHIN LIGER
(8) 222, Hiroshima, Japan
10—SCOTT HALL
(–) 290, Miami, FL

OFFICIAL RATINGS

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue. while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue.

For period ended October 20, 2001

ALL PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Michael Modest; **1**—Donovan Morgan; **2**—Jardi Frantz; **3**—Giant Singh; **4**—Vincenzo Massaro; **5**—Maxx Justice; **6**—Mark Smith; **7**—Tony Jones; **8**—Christopher Daniels; **9**—Boyce LeGrande; **10**—Tommy Blaze.

BAD 2 THE BONE WRESTLING: Champion—Vic the Bruiser; **1**—T.J. Lightnin'; **2**—Maxx Mizery; **3**—Billy Black; **4**—PsychoDelic; **5**—BioHazard; **6**—J.C. Bailey; **7**—Manslaughter; **8**—Randy Royal; **9**—Simon Sezz; **10**—Chip Stifler.

BIG JAPAN PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Kamikaze; **1**—John Zandig; **2**—Shadow WX; **3**—Jun Kasai; **4**—Men's Teoh; **5**—Abdullah Kobayashi; **6**—Daisuke Sekimoto; **7**—Winger; **8**—Ryuji Ito; **9**—Benkei; **10**—Shunme Matsuzaki.

CENTRAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Tommy Green; **1**—Terry Alan; **2**—The Wurm; **3**—Miss Diamond; **4**—Maddawg; **5**—Jimmy Justice; **6**—Redneck Superstar; **7**—Extreme Nova; **8**—Goat Daddy; **9**—Skip Sherwood; **10**—Jesse Loveman.

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION: Champion—Scoot Andrews; **1**—Mozart Fontaine; **2**—Christopher Daniels; **3**—American Dragon; **4**—Low-Ki; **5**—Pete Gas; **6**—Crowbar; **7**—Cheetah Master; **8**—Prince Nana; **9**—Simon Diamond; **10**—Johnny Maxx.

EXODUS WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—George South; **1**—Baddstreet; **2**—Scotty McKeever; **3**—George South Jr.; **4**—Gladiator II; **5**—Flaming Youth; **6**—Chris Nelson; **7**—Black Diamond; **8**—Hector Guerrero; **9**—Gary Royal; **10**—Cruel Connection II.

INTERNATIONAL WRESTLING CARTEL: Champion—Orion; **1**—Super Hentai; **2**—Shirley Doe; **3**—Jimmy Vegas; **4**—Dennis Gregory; **5**—Crusher Hanson; **6**—Protege; **7**—Boomer Payne; **8**—Kid Sensation; **9**—Bubba the Bulldog; **10**—Scott Gash.

MICHINOKU PRO WRESTLING: Champion—The Great Sasuke; **1**—Tiger Mask; **2**—Jinsei Shinzaki; **3**—Dick Togo; **4**—Gran Hamada; **5**—Men's Teoh; **6**—Masao Orihara; **7**—Hideki Nishida; **8**—Tomohiro Ishii; **9**—Saikick; **10**—Ryuji Ito.

NWA SOUTHWEST: Champion—Hotstuff Hernandez; **1**—Mike Anthony; **2**—Kevin Northcutt; **3**—J.P. Black; **4**—Al Jackson; **5**—Hellraiser Hark; **6**—John Allen; **7**—Chris Young; **8**—Brian Brenham; **9**—Ikaika Loa; **10**—Rudy Boy Gonzalez.

SOUTH TEXAS EXTREME WRESTLING: Champion—The Shadow; **1**—Ace Cage; **2**—The Devastator; **3**—Judge Doom; **4**—Reno Hall; **5**—El Latino; **6**—Tito Sanchez; **7**—Damien Cross; **8**—Jeromy Sage; **9**—Black Gordman Jr.; **10**—Gino Hall.

TOP ROPE CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Adam Knight; **1**—Rob Stardom; **2**—Shane Madison; **3**—Vance Nevada; **4**—T.J. Bratt; **5**—The Axe; **6**—Robby Royce; **7**—Darren Dalton; **8**—Zack Mercury; **9**—Will Damon; **10**—Donnie DiCaprio.

WORLD LEAGUE WRESTLING: Champion—Butch Reed; **1**—Bull Schmitt; **2**—Ron Harris; **3**—Curt Hennig; **4**—Superstar Steve; **5**—Matt Murphy; **6**—The Drill Instructor; **7**—Trevor Rhodes; **8**—Don Harris; **9**—Wade Chism; **10**—Mr. Destiny.

ALL-JAPAN

Triple Crown Champion:
KEIJI MUTO
(C) 245, Yamanashi, Japan

1—GENICHIRO TENRYU
(1) 235, Tokyo, Japan
2—TOSHIAKI KAWADA
(3) 245, Ashikaga, Japan
3—TAIYO KEA
(2) 235, Honolulu, HI
4—MASA CHONO
(4) 235, Tokyo, Japan
5—HIROSHI HASE
(5) 225, Tokyo, Japan
6—MIKE BARTON
(7) 263, Austin, TX
7—STEVE WILLIAMS
(8) 265, Norman, OK
8—GEORGE HINES
(–) 278, Houston, TX
9—MASA FUCHI
(6) 225, Tokyo, Japan
10—YOJI ANJOH
(9) 234, Tokyo, Japan

PRO WRESTLING NOAH

GHC Champion:
JUN AKIYAMA
(C) 225, Hiroshima, Japan

1—MITSUHARU MISAWA
(1) 228, Ashikaga, Japan
2—VADER
(2) 450, Denver, CO
3—YOSHIHIRO TAKAYAMA
(6) 270, Sapporo, Japan
4—TAKAO OMORI
(3) 221, Tokyo, Japan
5—MICHAEL MODEST
(10) 235, New York, NY
6—2 COLD SCORPIO
(9) 222, Denver, CO
7—AKIRA TAUE
(4) 265, Chichibu, Japan
8—TAKESHI MORISHIMA
(5) 281, Tokyo, Japan
9—TAKESHI RIKIOH
(8) 286, Sakurai, Japan
10—YOSHINARI OGAWA
(–) 202, Fichigi, Japan

EMLL

EMLL Champion:
UNIVERSO DOS MIL
(C) 240, Mexico City, Mexico

1—DR. WAGNER JR.
(4) 215, Mexico City, Mexico
2—ULTIMO GUERRERO
(2) 173, Mexico City, Mexico
3—EL HIJO DEL SANTO
(1) 180, Tulancingo, Mexico
4—APOLO DANTES
(10) 215, Guadalajara, Mexico
5—FUERZA GUERRERA
(–) 175, Mexico City, Mexico
6—SHOCKER
(8) 185, Guadalajara, Mexico
7—ATLANTIS
(–) 180, Guadalajara, Mexico
8—JUVENTUD GUERRERA
(–) 165, Mexico City, Mexico
9—MR. NIEBLA
(3) 185, Cualtitlan, Mexico
10—FELINO
(9) 165, Mexico City, Mexico

AAA

AAA Champion:
LATIN LOVER
(C) 190, Monterrey, Mexico

1—HECTOR GARZA
(4) 220, Monterrey, Mexico
2—HEAVY METAL
(3) 180, Mexico City, Mexico
3—CIBERNETICO
(1) 235, Mexico City, Mexico
4—PERRO AGUAYO JR.
(2) 165, Zacatecas, Mexico
5—ABISMO NEGRO
(6) 210, Pachua, Mexico
6—ELECTRO SHOCK
(7) 208, Mexico City, Mexico
7—EL CANEK
(8) 235, Mexico City, Mexico
8—PIRATA MORGAN
(–) 221, Mexico City, Mexico
9—JERRY ESTRADA
(10) 239, Montclova, Mexico
10—EL TEXANO
(9) 225, Mexico City, Mexico

Ratings Analysis

Every month, this column will tell fans how we go about rating over 200 wrestlers in 22 different categories. It is a behind-the-scenes look at the most important–and respected–ratings system in the sport. This column is vital reading for all wrestling fans.

Y2J finally gets his shot? We've been asking the question for a while now. Y2J himself has probably been wondering for quite some time, too. You might have been giving it a lot of thought as well. **Chris Jericho**. Extremely popular. Consistently very good in the ring. Extremely charismatic. Funny with a microphone in his hand (especially when **Stephanie McMahon-Helmsley** is around).

Chris Jericho

So why—why, why, why!—hasn't he developed into a serious main-eventer?

We could speculate all day, but we're not about to do so. That's because Y2J finally appeared on the verge of getting his shot at main-eventing as we compiled these ratings. A misunderstanding between him and **The Rock** and an errant chair shot in early-October seemed to set up a heel turn for Jericho.

We predicted such an occurrence way back in the July 2001 issue of *The Wrestler* ("Jerichoholics Beware! Serious Withdrawal Symptoms Are In Store!"). In that story, we made the argument that as long as he relied so heavily on his razor-sharp wit, he would have a hard time reaching that elite level of the WWF and, more important, *staying* there.

The next few months should give us a good indication of what Y2J can do in a villainous role. Many still think he was at his all-time best when he was annoying fan favorites during his WCW career. Jericho was still hearing a lot of cheers as we were finishing off this issue, though he didn't look happy about the fast-rising popularity of **Rob Van Dam**. It shouldn't be long before RVD is main-eventing pay-per-views.

In case you haven't noticed, Jericho checks in at number 10 in this month's Top 10, which should be no surprise. He's been in the Top 10 pretty consistently during the last few years. But he's never been number one. That sums up his WWF career pretty well: always been *one* of the hot guys, but never *the* top guy, never the number-one fan favorite. Sure, he main-evented King of the Ring with **Chris Benoit** in a three-way match with **Steve Austin**, but soon after that match was over, he was knocked down on the card a few notches again.

We stand by our previous assertion that Jericho the heel will be even more entertaining than the Jericho we've watched for the last two years. We still think he can main-event regularly. And we wouldn't be surprised to see his name at the very top of the Top 10 within a few months.

What's up with The Hardy Boyz? Perhaps the best way to sum up **Jeff** and **Matt Hardy's** situation is to call it a good news/bad news deal. The good news, as documented in the February 2002 issue of *Inside Wrestling,* is that the brothers have averted what practically everyone thought was an inevitable split. They are able to split their time fairly evenly between singles and tag team wrestling and remain happy.

Jeff Hardy

The bad news is their career progress has stalled a bit as a result. **Jeff Hardy's** shocking win over **Triple-H** for the Intercontinental title back in April didn't turn out to be the start of a promising singles career. He lost the belt back less than a week later. Save for several brief reigns as WWF hardcore champion and some absolutely brilliant matches with Rob Van Dam, he hasn't accomplished much in his solo career since upsetting Hunter. That isn't to say he isn't still capable, of course.

Likewise, brother Matt has lost momentum. He has been quiet in the singles ranks since dropping the WWF European belt to **The Hurricane**. Some felt he would use that belt as a steppingstone to more prestigious championships. He still might.

Was the Hardys' victory over **Booker T** and **Test** for the WCW tag title just before this issue went to press a good thing for their career development or a bad thing? Depends on how you look at things. Having Matt and Jeff as the stars of your tag team division is wonderful, but we wonder if the WWF has given up on their solo careers or just put them on hold. Neither brother made the ratings as a singles wrestler this month. We'll see if that changes next month and beyond.

That'll do it! If you have any questions or comments regarding our ratings or what you see in this column, feel free to send them to: "Ratings Analysis," c/o PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED, Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. □

BACK ISSUES!

Since its debut in 1992, the Wrestle America concept has proven to be wildly popular with the wrestling public. No other magazine offers such well-rounded coverage of the U.S. wrestling scene. Supplies of back issues are limited, and at only $5 apiece (postage included), they are moving fast. Order today!

Aug. 1992: In Search Of An American Hero. Color centerfold—Dustin Rhodes vs. Arn Anderson. Plus: Ultimate Warrior, Jerry Lawler, Sting.

Sept. 1992: Papa Shango Possesses ... The Warrior! Color centerfold—Sabu vs. Mr. Onita. Plus: Sting-Nikita Koloff, Jim Cornette, SMW.

Oct. 1992: Summerslam: Everything You Need To Know About This Mega-Event. Color centerfold—Undertaker vs. Berzerker. Plus: Mike Davis, Windham-Austin.

Nov. 1992: Trading Places: The Steiners For Gordy & Williams—Bad Deal. Color centerfold Jerry Lawler & Jeff Jarrett vs. The Moondogs. Plus: Virgil, ECW, Bob Backlund.

Dec. 1992: Hulk Hogan Left Wrestling For This? Color Centerfold—The Ultimate Warrior vs. Papa Shango. Plus: NWA belt, Brian Pillman, Rock 'n' Roll Express.

Jan. 1993: The Ultimate Destiny Of The Ultimate Maniacs: Self-Destruction. Color Centerfold—Greg Valentine vs. Rick Steiner. Plus: Scott Steiner-Hawk, Kowalski-Tolos.

Feb. 1993: Can The WWF Withstand The Real Bam Bam Bigelow? Color Centerfold—Repo Man vs. Crush. Plus: Brian Christopher, Vader-Rude.

March 1993: The Complete Madusa: The Story Of Wrestling's Sexiest Women. Color Centerfold—Calendar. Plus: Rock 'n' Roll Express, Nasty Boys, Funk-Gilbert.

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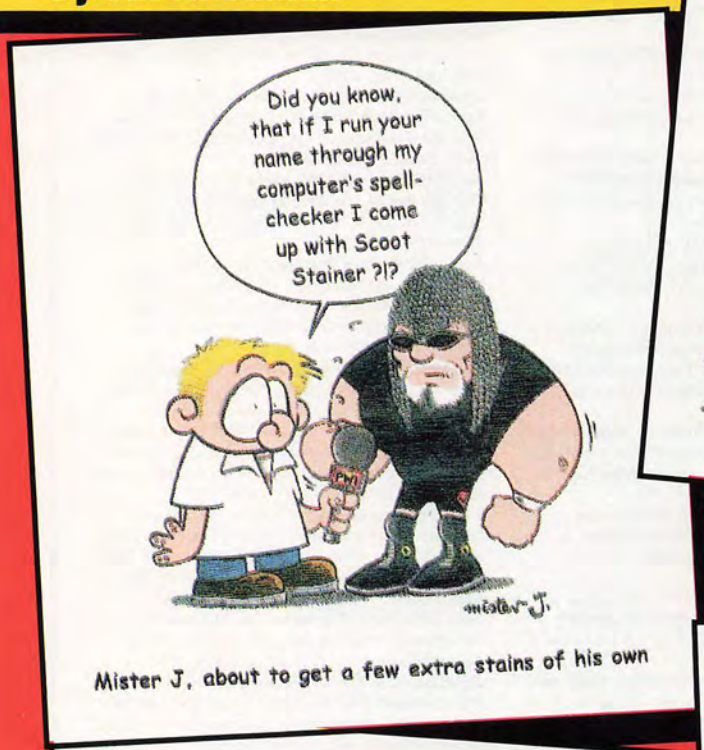
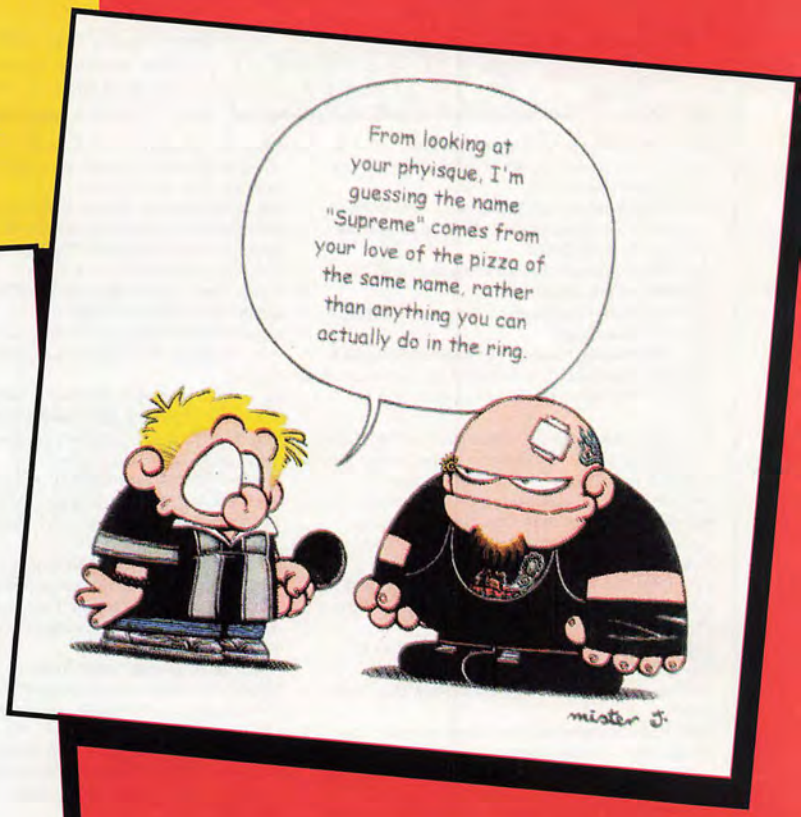


Mister J. about to get a few extra stains of his own


From looking at your phyisque, I'm guessing the name "Supreme" comes from your love of the pizza of the same name, rather than anything you can actually do in the ring.
mister J.

You'd have thought if they wanted a clueless wannabe super-hero, the choice would've been easy... I mean, what about me... what about super-nova?!?
mister J.

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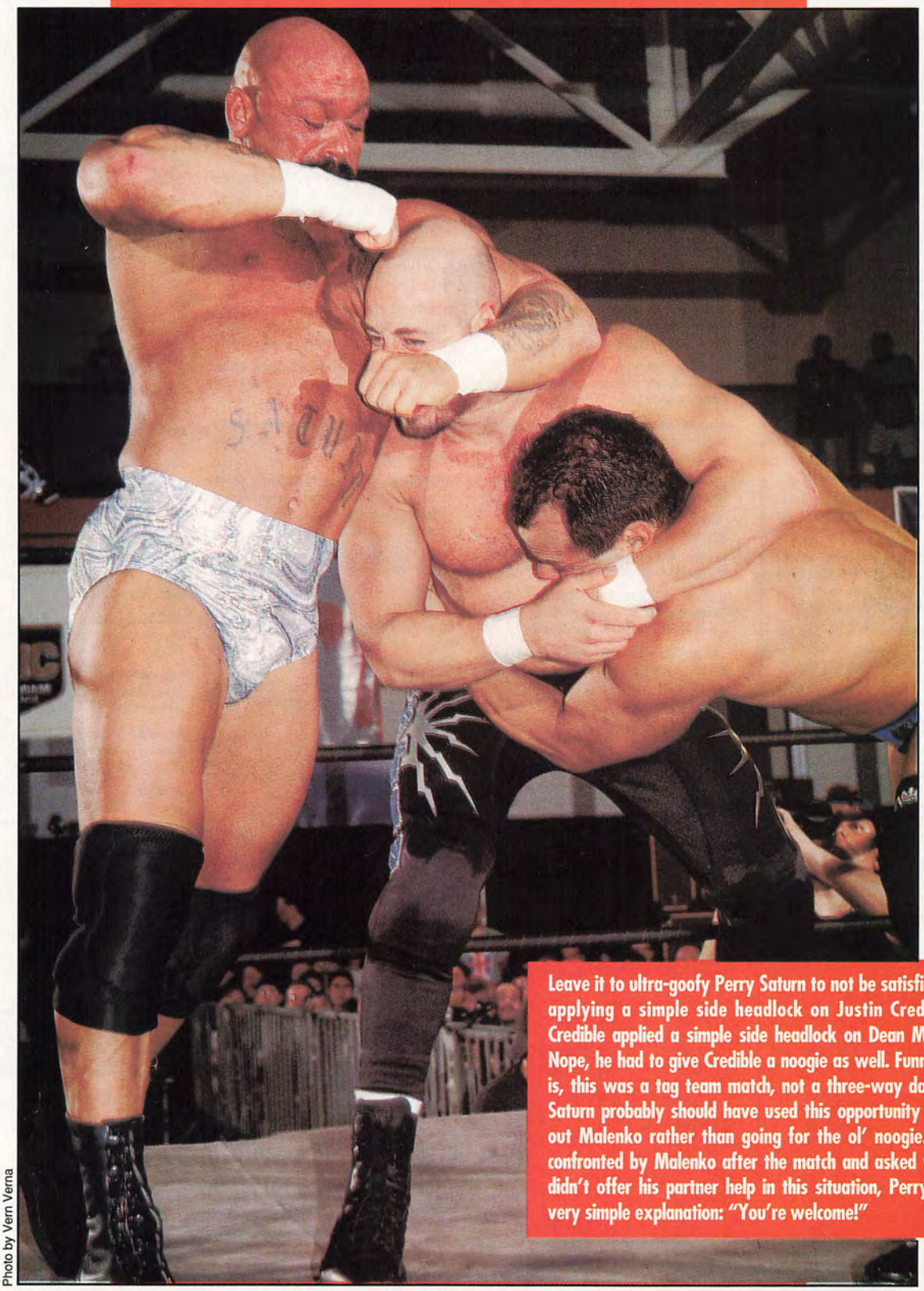

Photo by Vern Verna

Leave it to ultra-goofy Perry Saturn to not be satisfied with applying a simple side headlock on Justin Credible as Credible applied a simple side headlock on Dean Malenko. Nope, he had to give Credible a noogie as well. Funny thing is, this was a tag team match, not a three-way dance. So Saturn probably should have used this opportunity to help out Malenko rather than going for the ol' noogie. When confronted by Malenko after the match and asked why he didn't offer his partner help in this situation, Perry had a very simple explanation: "You're welcome!"

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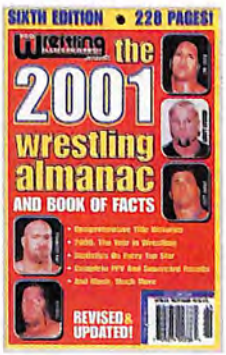

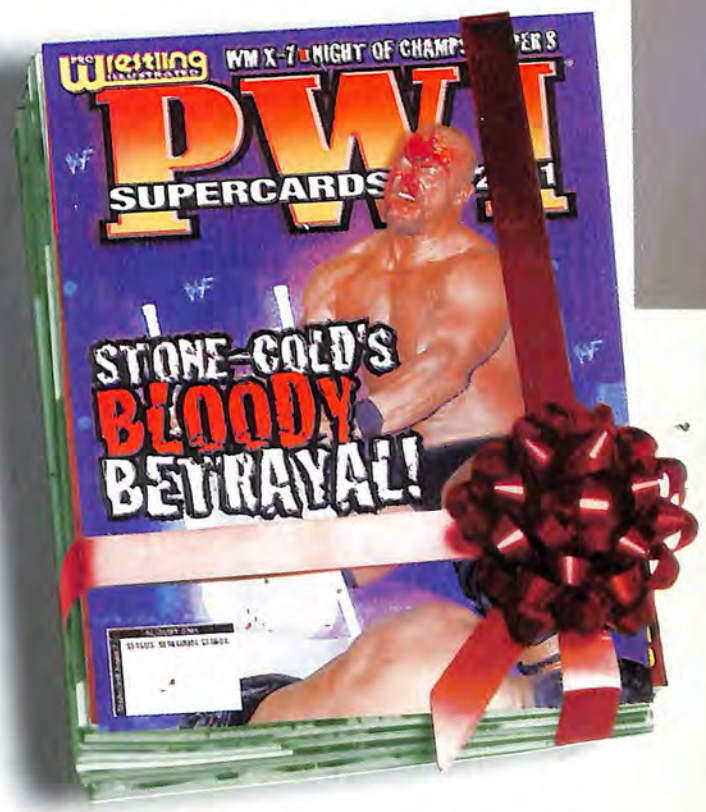

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